

Kurdish Votes in the June 24, 2018 Elections: An Analysis of Electoral Results in Turkey's Eastern Cities

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ABSTRACT *This article analyzes the voting patterns in eastern Turkey for the June 24, 2018 elections and examines the cross-sectional and longitudinal variation in 24 eastern cities where Kurdish votes tend to matter significantly. Based on the regional and district level electoral data, the article has four major conclusions. Firstly, the AK Party and the HDP are still the two dominant parties in Turkey's east. Secondly, HDP votes took a downward direction in the November 2015 elections in eastern Turkey after the peak results in the June 2015 elections, a trend which continued in the June 24 elections. Thirdly, the pre-electoral coalitions of other parties in the June 24 elections cost the HDP seats in the region. Finally, neither the Kurdish votes nor the eastern votes move in the form of a homogenous bloc but intra-Kurdish and intra-regional differences prevail.*

This article analyzes Kurdish votes specifically for the June 24, 2018 elections by first addressing the political landscape in eastern and southeastern Turkey before these elections. It further elaborates on the pre-electoral status of the main actors of ethnic Kurdish politics -the People's Democratic Party (HDP), Free Cause Party (HÜDA-PAR) and other small ethnic parties. Then the paper discusses the election results in the eastern and southeastern provinces where there is a high population density of Kurds. The June 24, 2018 elections were actually comprised of two elections: parliamentary and presidential. While this article addresses both elections, it primarily focuses on the general election results.

The elections held on June 24, 2018 made a lasting impact on the political life of Turkey. In a sense, this election was the most significant election in the history of Turkey since the first multi-party and democratic¹ general elections held in 1950. Turkey, which underwent the democratization process with the 1950 elections, decided to transform the system with the referendum of 2017 and made the actual transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential system with the June 24 elections.

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In the 16 years since 2002, with the exception of the June 7, 2015 general elections, the AK Party has been the party most supported by Kurds in all local, parliamentary and presidential elections, and referendums in Turkey

Most of the proposed constitutional amendments included in the April 2017 referendum, with which Turkey adopted the presidential system, were implemented after the June 24 elections. In other words, the elections held on June 24 were the first elections of the new system of government² in Turkey.

The June 24 elections simultaneously elected the new president on the one hand (in other words, the first president of the new system) and on the other hand, identified the members of the parliament who are important in terms of executive-legislative balance in the new system. Kurdish votes played a key role in the June 24 elections in both respects (to constitute the majority in legislation and to elect the president).

Kurdish votes played a key role in the June 24 elections for two reasons. First, whether the HDP would exceed the 10 percent threshold in the parliamentary elections would determine the AK Party's chance to hold a majority in parliament. As explained below, most of the HDP seats in the parliament generally came from the eastern and southeastern provinces. There are no effective parties in the region, other than the AK Party and the HDP, and this has been the case since the 2002 elections even when considering the HDP's antecedent parties. Therefore, in a scenario that the HDP could not exceed the threshold, the party that would win most of the HDP seats from the eastern provinces would be the AK Party. This way, the AK Party would have won 50 more seats in the parliament and could hold the majority.

The second factor that rendered Kurdish votes noteworthy in the June 24 elections was directly related to the presidential election. Winning in the presidential elections requires 50%+1 votes in the first or second round. Just like any significant segment of society, the Kurdish votes could not be neglected if such a high rate of votes was to be achieved. For this reason, the Republican People's Party (CHP), which sought the HDP votes in the case of a second round being held in the presidential elections, and the İyi Party put micro Kurdish initiatives into practice in their election campaigns. While İyi Party chairwoman and presidential candidate Meral Akşener called for the release of the HDP's former co-leader Demirtaş, who was imprisoned,³ the CHP's presidential candidate Muharrem İnce did not stop there and went as far as to visit Demirtaş at the prison in Edirne where he was jailed.⁴ Hoping to obtain more votes, İnce used this visit as a campaign tool in the Hakkari rally, which took place right after his visit to Demirtaş. As the mainstream opposition parties kept seeking a share of HDP votes in this way, the HDP largely maintained the position it

used in the preceding election campaigns. While the HDP emphasized being a political party for Turkey in general, it highlighted a policy based on ethnic identity in east and southeast Turkey.

This was an election strategy that the HDP had previously used during the 2015 elections and it was particularly successful in the June 7, 2015 elections. The AK Party, which took part in the elections as the ruling party, aimed to preserve and even increase its votes as the only party that could be effective in the region apart from the HDP.

Small-scale ethnic parties in the region also made a tremendous impact before the June 24 elections in addition to the parties previously mentioned in the article. The Free Cause Party (HÜDA-PAR) ran with independent candidates in Diyarbakir and Batman and with the party list in the rest of the country for parliamentary elections while supporting the AK Party candidate Erdoğan in the presidential election. Other small-scale ethnic parties negotiated with the HDP and HÜDA-PAR under a framework called the Kurdistan Bloc. However, unable to take what they wanted from these two parties, the bloc did not take a clear stance as a whole. For example, Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR), which was in the bloc for a while, decided to run with independent candidates in five provinces.

Under these circumstances, the results of the June 24 elections are as follows: (i) The AKP and the HDP continued to remain as the only two effective parties in the region, (ii) HDP votes in the region, which had diminished from the June 7, 2015 elections to the November 1 elections, decreased further in the June 24 elections, (iii) Election alliances of other parties cost seats to the HDP, (iv) It was once again observed that Kurdish voters in Turkey do not act as a bloc but intra-Kurdish and intra-regional differences prevail in voter behavior.⁵

Outlook Before the June 24 Elections

Since the 2002 general elections, the first election for the AK Party, the party has been in competition with the HDP and its predecessors⁶ for Kurdish votes. From this perspective, the AK Party, along with the HDP and its predecessors, has become one of the two parties with which Turkey's Kurds are mobilized most in terms of political participation. In fact, in the 16 years since 2002, with the exception of the June 7, 2015 general elections, the AK Party has been the party most supported by Kurds in all local, parliamentary and presidential elections, and referendums in Turkey.⁷ The AK Party's inclusion of fractions, which are economically and politically in the periphery of Turkish society, may be regarded as the structural reason for this support. This new economic and political mobilization has been possible with the AK Party's political and

Voters from the province of Hakkari, a city with a Kurdish majority in the southeastern part of Turkey, cast their votes during the June 24 elections.

MEHMET DAYAN /
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economic liberalization politics.⁸ With such inclusive policies, the AK Party, which came to power with the November 3, 2002 elections, has considered the Kurdish issue a priority.⁹

In order to eliminate problems caused by the Kurdish Question, the AK Party has taken many rather reformist steps. The AK Party, which has passed many laws in regards to the teaching and use of Kurdish in public spaces as well as ensuring the enforcement of these laws, has enabled significant progress in terms of sociocultural rights. As Alptekin and Köse¹⁰ emphasize, the AK Party has not confined itself to legal regulations while one by one removing the legal obstructions against the use and teaching of the Kurdish language. Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) began initiatives to launch a channel that would exclusively broadcast in Kurdish following the addition of the article “The institution can broadcast in different languages and dialects other than Turkish” within the scope of Law No. 5767 (*Amendment to the Turkish Radio and Television Law and Laws that Regulate the Establishment and Broadcasts of Radio and Televisions*)¹¹ passed on June 11, 2008 and put into action on June 26, 2008). TRT Şeş (TRT 6, or TRT Kurdî as it is known today), which began test broadcasts on December 25, 2008, started regular broadcasts in the Kurmanci and Sorani dialects of Kurdish as well as in the Zaza language on January 1, 2009. Kurdish language, taught by means of private courses since 2004, started to be taught as an elective course from the 5th grade in the framework of “Living Languages and Dialects” course in the 2012-2013 academic year. Additionally, steps were taken for the teaching and academic study of Kurdish at universities. The first Kurdology Institute was founded within Mardin Artuklu University in

2009 after its approval by the decree of the Cabinet of Ministers. Later, the institute was renamed the Living Languages Institute and a Department of Kurdish Language and Culture was constituted within it.

The AK Party has also enabled a legal space for ethnic political movements. Ethnic Kurdish politics in the vein of the HDP has been the movement most plagued by the penalty of party closing actions in Turkey. The last party in the movement to be shut down was the Democratic Society Party (DTP) in 2009. By way of legal changes, the AK Party has made it more difficult to ban parties. With the 2010 constitutional referendum, it was regulated that 2/3 of the votes of the Supreme Court was necessary rather than the previously accepted 3/5 in order to shut down parties or stop them from receiving government aid, thus making it more difficult to take such punitive action.

One other important step was the initiative (as a bundle of recognition, negotiation, and reconciliation) processes undertaken by the AK Party in order to carry the Kurdish issue outside of the security domain. However, these processes were not able to eliminate violence caused by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terror. The PKK's attacks ending the ceasefire period showed that it was not an actor to be conferred with. This reality has blockaded the path of negotiation and reconciliation processes for Turkey as of today and prioritized security precautions.¹²

If we are to look at the last elections (the elections of 2015) before the June 24 elections, we see that the AK Party, which had dropped behind at the June 7 elections, once again emerged as the single party in power after the November 1 elections. While parties with strong ties to Turkish and Kurdish nationalism increased their votes in the June 7 elections, the AK Party and the CHP, more centrist parties on the question of nationalism, demonstrated a decline.¹³ Voters' quest for a stable and strong government, the AK Party's consideration of voters' criticism and the mistakes made by opposition parties in their campaigns ultimately gave the AK Party, once again, the opportunity to set up a single-party government with the November 1 elections.¹⁴

The AK Party has been favored both by Kurdish voters and by the entire electorate in general. Eventually, it has become a party referred to as a dominant party citing the political science literature.¹⁵ In other words, the answer to the question of who will win the next elections has become "the AK Party." Hence, the AK Party's main goal has become not only to emerge from the ballot box in first place but also to become the first party by a wide margin.



The June 24 elections have shown that the HDP and the PKK cannot appeal to Turkish socialists without alienating conservative Kurdish nationalists

HDP at the Onset of June 24 Elections

While the AK Party is known in literature as a catch-all party, in other words a party that appeals to every social segment, the HDP's situation is not as clear. Whether the HDP is an ethnic party, an ideological (socialist) party, or both, is a topic of discussion. Ethnic parties are defined in literature as parties which prioritize the interests of a certain ethnic group.¹⁶ These kinds of parties can also entertain other issues as part of their agenda, but their focus is on the issues and interests of the ethnic group to whom they try to appeal. We can add other properties to this definition of ethnic parties. While they may have candidates belonging to other ethnic groups, the majority of their candidates will generally be of a single ethnic group. Last of all, the majority of those who vote for the party will be of the ethnic group the party focuses on. The HDP displays all of these characteristics and thus can be considered as an ethnic party. Still, being an ethnic party is not its only characteristic.

As well as being an ethnic party, the HDP is considered as a socialist party. While the party does not use this adjective in its election manifesto, it implies a socialist character by emphasizing "class struggle" in the speeches of its parliamentary members and co-leaders.¹⁷ The party also has the tendency to choose one of its co-chairs from socialist parties during co-chair selections. Figen Yüksekdağ, previous co-chair of the party, was a previous chair of the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP), which partnered with the HDP after an agreement between the ESP and the HDP. Sezai Temelli, one of the current co-chairs, was previously part of the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), another small socialist party. Alongside adopting a socialist discourse and selecting co-chairs who represent socialist parties, the HDP forms election coalitions with many socialist parties in Turkey. For example, socialist organizations, some of which took part in the elections, announced their support for the HDP in the June 24 elections.¹⁸ In response to this, the HDP has nominated prominent figures from these parties in the parliamentary elections.

Still, it cannot be said that the HDP balances its ethnic and socialist characteristics without issues. While the party gravitates towards a more socialist rhetoric, the conservative Kurdish nationalists of the party do not regard it positively. Additionally, the HDP formed an election coalition with the small socialist parties of Turkey during the June 24 elections, but was not able to do so with small ethnic (Kurdish nationalist) parties.¹⁹ This tendency of the party is largely a result of the steering and guidance by the PKK. Mustafa Karasu,²⁰ a member of the PKK politburo, announced right before the June 24 elections why the HDP was moving in this direction. Karasu thought Turkish metropolitan cities would definitely be decisive in the success of HDP in the June 24 elections. So, the votes of the Turkish left are thought to be more significant than the votes (which are already seen as guaranteed) of conservative Kurdish nationalists.

However, the HDP's flirtation with Turkey's socialist segment can alienate conservative Kurdish nationalists from the party. For example, Altan Tan, Diyarbakır parliamentarian who was vital in forming a bridge between the HDP and conservative Kurds, left the HDP and became a candidate for the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*) in the June 24 elections. According to Tan, the HDP's coalition with the marginal left and rejection of coalitions with conservative Kurdish parties like HÜDA-PAR was a mistake.²¹ Thus, the June 24 elections have shown that the HDP and the PKK cannot appeal to Turkish socialists without alienating conservative Kurdish nationalists.

The biggest criticism of these small ethnic parties towards the HDP as a larger ethnic party was that the HDP was not ethnic enough. In result, they accused the HDP of betraying Kurdish voters and “the values of Kurdistan” as an ethnic party

Apart from the HDP's struggle to become more inclusive and expand its support basis without losing its ideologically motivated supporters, the party faced other problems too. Many high-ranking party officials, including its presidential candidate Selahattin Demirtaş, together with multiple mayors of the party were imprisoned starting from the fall of 2015 in a response to the hardening security measures of the government against the new terror wave of the PKK starting in the summer of 2015. The accusations claimed that the imprisoned party officials were engaging in the pro-PKK propaganda and, at times, providing financial and other logistical support to the PKK.²²

Small Ethnic Parties

Another factor, which presents itself in relation to Kurdish votes before the June 24 elections, is the situation of small Kurdish parties. Socialist Party of Kurdistan (PSK), Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), Northern Kurdistan Democrat Party (KDP-Bakur), Kurdistan Democrat Party-Turkey (KDP-Turkey), Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR) and the Azadî Movement prepared a joint declaration before the elections and then decided to meet with the HDP. The aim was to form a joint list of parliamentarians with the HDP and compete in the election together. However, this plan collapsed before it could be further developed.

The PDK-Bakur declared it would not participate in the elections because they considered the elections illegitimate. The remaining five parties tried to form an electoral coalition with the HDP but announced that their initiatives were unsuccessful. In a joint declaration, the parties said that their demands

A more reasonable and moderate approach is to consider HÜDA-PAR as a movement that has evolved from a group with radical roots to a peaceful political party

were disregarded by the HDP.²³ Another subject of objection was the HDP declaring its election manifesto without conferring with these five parties. Moreover, this five-way coalition considered the HDP's manifesto to be against the spirit of the negotiations they planned to continue with the HDP. In summary, the biggest criticism of these small ethnic parties towards the HDP as a larger ethnic party was that the HDP was not ethnic enough. In result, they accused the HDP of betraying Kurdish voters and “the values of Kurdistan” as an ethnic party.²⁴

At the end of the day, it is seen time and time again that while these small ethnic parties have found themselves a place in regional public opinion, they have not been able to engender significant voter support. It is also observed that there is an odd conundrum where there are concentrations of Turkey's Kurds. What we see in the region is the domination of the AK Party delivering messages of mainstream politics and the HDP delivering messages of ethnic politics. Ethnic parties are far from forming a consistent and tight-knit bloc. The HDP, the largest and most important of these parties is instrumentalized by the PKK on the legal political stage of Turkey. Thus, the HDP cannot adopt a peaceful political discourse that will distance itself from the terrorism of the PKK. Other ethnic parties, on the other hand, cannot find sufficient public support in the region. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the election was once again a competition between the AK Party and the HDP in the region. However, the HÜDA-PAR, one of the small ethnic parties, deserves to be examined separately.

HÜDA-PAR as a Minor but Influential Ethnic Party

The HÜDA-PAR is one of many small ethnic Kurdish parties, which actively participate in politics in Turkey. The party was founded in 2012 and has been active in the Turkish political landscape since then.²⁵ Actually, the movement has had a problematic past before becoming a party. It is said that the party has ties to Hezbollah,²⁶ which was held responsible for many kidnappings and murders in the 1990s. Because of this, some consider the party to be a continuation of Hezbollah. There have also been those who claim that Hezbollah and HÜDA-PAR are completely unrelated. A more reasonable and moderate approach is to consider HÜDA-PAR as a movement that has evolved from a group with radical roots to a peaceful political party. While there is no consensus on the relation between HÜDA-PAR and Hezbollah, the dominant opinion is that the two are not completely unrelated. Still, it is seen that HÜ-

DA-PAR distances itself from violence as of today, therefore, making the party a legitimate member of Turkey's political spectrum.

The HÜDA-PAR has not been able to draw the attention of voters in elections until today. While the electoral races in the region tend to be between the AK Party and the HDP, the HÜDA-PAR has partaken in certain elections itself while abstaining from others for the benefit of other parties. While the HDP attracts secular and ethnic nationalist Kurds, the AK Party draws the votes of conservative Kurds. The HÜDA-PAR is ideologically positioned between the AK Party and the HDP. In other words, it has both ethnic nationalist and conservative tendencies. Further, the party is not only conservative but Islamist. The emphasis on *ummah*,²⁷ the calls to pay attention to Palestine, the stressing of a system that will spread an Islamic lifestyle in Turkey are all reasons to consider the party Islamist.

The distinction between the Islamism of HÜDA-PAR and the conservatism of the AK Party may require further explanation. While both parties embrace Islamic values, the AK Party does this in a more conservative fashion. According to the AK Party, the national culture of Turkey must be preserved and the connection to the long history of the country, extending to the Ottoman period, must not be lost. Islam has a central place in Turkey's national culture and the AK Party believes this culture must be preserved. However, unlike many Islamist movements, this conservative tendency of the AK Party is compatible with the secular constitutional structure of the country. On the other hand, the HÜDA-PAR has a more problematic view with regards to many of the secular laws and practices of the country.

While the AK Party tends towards conservatism and the HÜDA-PAR towards Islamism, both parties share the emphasis on the role of Islam in society and defend conservative social policies. Promoting the role of religion in the education of children, having an anti-abortion stance and policies aiming to minimize alcohol and drug consumption can be shown as examples of such policies. Perhaps because of this shared position, HÜDA-PAR decided to support the candidate of the AK Party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in the presidential elections of June 24 while competing as a party in the parliamentary elections.

What is the significance of the HÜDA-PAR's support in the presidential elections? HÜDA-PAR is too small a party to compete with the AK Party or the HDP in the elections. Still, the support of the HÜDA-PAR has portrayed the election to the Kurdish voters as a choice between those who have Islamic sensitivities and those who do not, instead of a choice between Turkish and Kurdish candidates. HÜDA-PAR's support of Erdoğan sent a pro-Erdoğan message to confused, conservative or perhaps even Islamist voters who were simultaneously Kurdish nationalists. This support was important for the AK Party, which formed a coalition with a Turkish nationalist party, the Nation-

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alist Movement Party (MHP), thus alienating some Kurdish voters.

The HÜDA-PAR's appeals not only mobilized their own voters to vote for Erdoğan, but also sent a message to wider Kurdish demographics. In other words, HÜDA-PAR told conservative Kurdish voters that Erdoğan was still the candidate who was closest to them. From this perspective, it can be said that HÜDA-PAR played a role in the HDP's declining votes in the region while the AK Party found success with Kurdish voters in the June 24 election results.²⁸

In light of this background, the June 24 elections can be analyzed more easily. We can speak of four principal results of the election in regards to Kur-

ish votes: (i) The AK Party and the HDP still dominate Turkey's elections in the east, (ii) The HDP votes, which had declined between June 7 and November 1 elections, continued dropping in the region, (iii) Pre-electoral alliances of other parties cost seats to the HDP, (iv) Turkey's Kurdish votes do not act as a bloc as intra-Kurdish differences prevail in the region.²⁹

The AK Party and the HDP Still Dominate Turkey's Elections in the East

In the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey (Hatay included), where the ethnic Kurdish population is in significant numbers, the competition in this election took place between the AK Party and the HDP (see Table 1). This is not surprising due to the factors mentioned above. Whereas the AK Party won the first spot in 13 cities, the HDP came first in 11. While the AK Party won 62 seats from these cities in total, the numbers for the HDP, CHP, and MHP seats are, respectively, 46, 11 and 7. Even though the CHP and the MHP had significant votes in certain locations, they were not able to become the first party in any city. Nevertheless, the CHP reserved second rank in Ardahan, Erzincan, Gaziantep, Hatay, Malatya and Tunceli. The MHP, on the other hand, came second in Elazığ, Erzurum, Iğdır and Kilis (see Map 2). The AK Party and the HDP have also been unsuccessful in certain cities. The AK Party came third and, hence, is not amongst the top two parties in Iğdır and Tunceli while the HDP was not among the top three parties in Elazığ, Erzincan, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis and Malatya (see Map 3). While the lowest vote for the HDP in the region was 2.3 percent in Kilis, the lowest vote for the AK Party in the region was 14.7 percent in Tunceli. When cities where the AK Party was the most successful are examined, it can be seen that no parties other than the AK Party had any parliamentarians elected in Erzincan and Kilis.

As for the minor ethnic parties, the HAK-PAR entered the elections with independent candidates, but was not able to surpass a few hundred votes in the cities it competed in. HÜDA-PAR can be considered to be more successful than other minor ethnic parties. When its independent candidates in Diyarbakir and Batman are also included, HÜDA-PAR received over 200,000 votes. If trends in the region remain the same, a party with HÜDA-PAR's support can gain an additional parliamentary seat in general elections or win an additional municipality in local elections in cities like Batman or Diyarbakır.

Table 1: The Top 4 Parties in Eastern and Southeastern Regions (including Hatay) in the June 24 General Elections

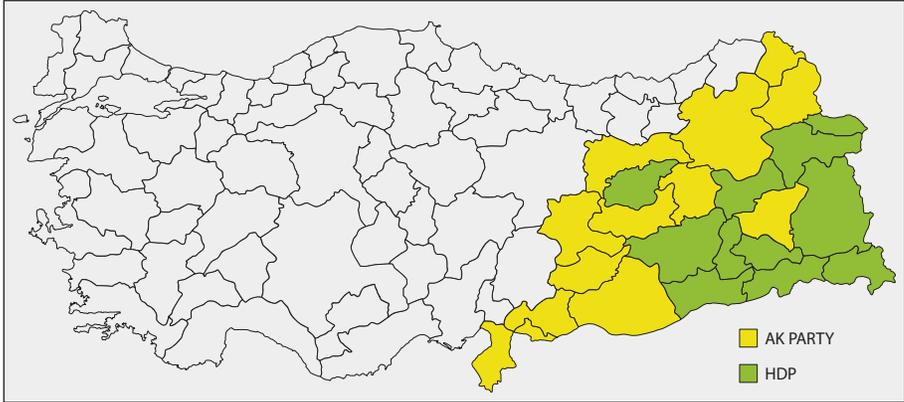
City	AK Party Vote		HDP Vote		MHP Vote		CHP Vote	
	Rate / Number of	Parliamentarians	Rate / Number of	Parliamentarians	Rate / Number of	Parliamentarians	Rate / Number of	Parliamentarians
Adiyaman	55.1	4	15.41	0	9.15	0	12.05	1
Ağrı	28.81	1	62.23	3	2.51	0	2.91	0
Ardahan	37.15	1	23.38	0	6.77	0	25.87	1
Batman	24.91	1	62.07	4	1.2	0	1.87	0
Bingöl	55.28	2	26.81	1	5.87	0	2.3	0
Bitlis	44.82	2	42.54	1	4.08	0	2.73	0
Diyarbakır	21.46	3	65.54	9	1.4	0	2.5	0
Elazığ	54.58	4	10.05	0	13.54	0	10.74	1
Erzincan	44.76	2	5.65	0	18.62	0	25.5	0
Erzurum	54.81	4	11.96	0	18.53	1	4.42	0
Gaziantep	51.44	8	11.88	1	12.67	2	15.11	2
Hakkari	20.07	1	70.17	2	3.7	0	3.46	0
Hatay	36.2	5	11.02	1	14.44	1	30.58	4
Iğdır	20.72	0	44.23	1	23.9	1	2.84	0
Kars	37.91	2	31.9	1	7.23	0	14.33	0
Kilis	50.83	2	2.3	0	20.35	0	14.6	0
Malatya	53.87	4	7.02	0	16.12	1	16.73	1
Mardin	30.42	2	59.28	4	2.62	0	3.31	0
Muş	32.4	1	54.48	3	3.74	0	2.47	0
Siirt	38.97	1	51.07	2	3.52	0	2.55	0
Şanlıurfa	52.67	8	28.92	4	9.28	1	3.88	1
Şırnak	18.19	1	70.24	3	4.01	0	2.72	0
Tunceli	14.7	0	51.03	1	5.73	0	26.32	1
Van	31.77	3	59.32	5	3.08	0	2.64	0
Total		62		46		7		11

Note: Yellow for AK Party wins, Blue for HDP wins

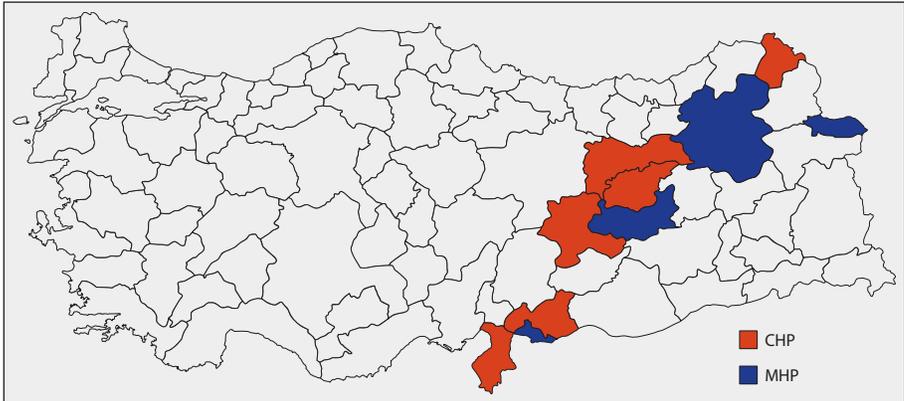
The tables and analyses in this section are focused on the parliamentary elections which formed one leg of the June 24 elections. When it is considered that Erdoğan gained more votes than his party, and Demirtaş won fewer votes than

his party, it can be said that the AK Party seems to be a clearer winner in the region in the June 24 presidential elections.

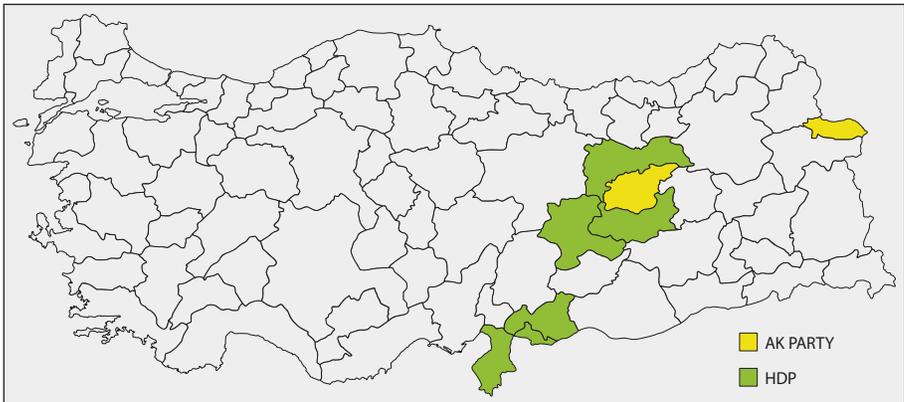
Map 1: Eastern and Southeastern Cities where the AK Party and the HDP Came First³⁰



Map 2: Eastern and Southeastern Cities where the CHP and the MHP Came Second



Map 3: Eastern and Southeastern Cities where the AK Party Is Not in the Top Two and the HDP Is Not in the Top Three



The HDP Votes Continue to Decline in the Region³¹

When compared to the November 2015 elections in the region, the HDP lost most votes in Şırnak (a decrease from 85 percent to 70 percent) and Hakkari (from 83 percent to 70 percent). In the June elections of 2015, the HDP had received more than 60 percent of the votes in eleven cities (more than 80 percent in two cities, more than 70 percent in six cities, and more than 60 percent in three cities), which dropped to 8 in the November 2015 elections, and finally dropped to 5 in the June 24 elections. The most striking drop took place in Bitlis. The HDP received over 60.36 percent of the votes in the June 7 elections in Bitlis, but has now fallen to second place behind the AK Party, which has become the leading party this past June.

Table 2: Number of Cities According to the Vote Percentages of the HDP in the June 7, November 1, and June 24 Elections

Vote Percentages	June 7, 2015	November 1, 2015	June 24, 2018
80% and Above	2	2	0
70-79%	6	1	2
60-69%	3	5	3
60% and Above (Total)	11	8	5

The AK Party, on the other hand, could not reach vote rates over 60 in the region in the parliamentary elections, but it did receive more than half of the votes in Kilis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Adıyaman, Malatya, Elazığ, Bingöl, and Erzurum. In the presidential elections, which took place on the same day, AK Party's candidate Erdogan received over 70 percent of the votes in Kilis, Elazığ, and Erzurum, and over 60 percent of the votes in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Adıyaman, Bingöl, Erzincan and Malatya.

Table 3: Number of Eastern and Southeastern Cities According to the Vote Percentages of Erdoğan and Demirtaş in the June 24 Elections

Vote Percentages	Erdoğan	Demirtaş
70% and Above	3	2
60-69%	6	3
50-59%	1	3
50% and Above (Total)	10	8

When the vote percentages or the number of high-percentage cities shown in Tables 2 and 3 are examined, it is seen that the HDP is in decline in the east-

HÜDA PAR, a pro-Kurdish political party, supported the AK Party candidate in the presidential elections of June 24, while competing separately as a party in the parliamentary elections.

SINAN GÜL /
AA Photo



ern cities. While the vote percentages of the HDP in Turkey as a whole have increased above the number of the November 1, 2015 elections, they have decreased in the region. How can this be explained? The HDP tried to conceal its Kurdish nationalist label and give the impression of a “party of Turkey” in the western cities of Turkey. While the Kurdish issue does not lose its position in the center of the party discourse, the movement has been increasingly leaning towards the issues of rights and political representation of women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) individuals, non-Muslims, and Alevis. Moreover, the party has followed a strategy of gathering Turkish socialists within itself and has entered into alliances with many left wing political parties and social movements in almost every election for which it ran. All of these initiatives have compounded the claim of being a true “party of Turkey” that the party portrays in the western cities of Turkey. Additionally, the anti-Erdoğan politics embodied in the HDP slogan “we will not make you president” has been effective in the CHP voter base and caused vote transfers to the HDP in CHP’s strongholds in western Turkey. It was observed that in the June 24 elections strategic votes³² were cast for the HDP in CHP strongholds of İstanbul such as Adalar, Beşiktaş, Kadıköy and Şişli.

With this intention, some CHP supporters seemed to vote for the HDP in the parliamentary elections while they cast their votes for the CHP candidate İnce in the presidential election. For example, the HDP received over 23 percent of the parliamentary votes in the Adalar district while its presidential candidate Demirtaş received only 8 percent of the votes. In Kadıköy, Demirtaş received

2.5 percent of votes while his party HDP won 13.5 percent. Similarly, the percentages for the HDP in Şişli were 18.2 percent and for Demirtaş 5.5 percent, for the HDP 13.9 percent and for Demirtaş 2.9 percent in Bakırköy, and for the HDP 16.5 percent and for Demirtaş 2.3 percent in Beşiktaş. The difference between the HDP and Demirtaş votes in these districts more or less corresponds to the difference between the vote

percentages of İnce and his party CHP. The increase of HDP votes in İstanbul (and generally in voting regions outside of the east) after the November 1, 2015 elections can be explained with the transfer of votes from the CHP base.³³ While this vote transfer has been able to slightly increase the votes of the HDP in the whole of Turkey, it should not obscure the party's decline in the eastern cities.

The principal difference that sets apart the June 24 elections was that parties were able to enter these elections with pre-electoral alliance blocks. This innovation means that parties left out of alliances will be disadvantaged

Alliances of Other Parties Cost Votes to the HDP

The principal difference that sets apart the June 24 elections was that parties were able to enter these elections with pre-electoral alliance blocks. This innovation means that parties left out of alliances will be disadvantaged. Thus, while the HDP could not gain a parliamentary seat in Adıyaman with a vote percentage of 15.41, the CHP was able to produce one with their percentage of 12.05 in the June 24 elections. The CHP's alliance partner, İyi Party, having a vote of over 5 percent in Adıyaman was decisive in this result. The CHP was also able to elect a parliamentary representative in Elazığ instead of the MHP who was three points ahead. This result was also strongly influenced by the İyi Party which had a vote percentage of 7.67 in Elazığ. The CHP-İyi Party alliance was beneficial for the İyi Party in Erzurum, causing the MHP to be unable to produce a second representative in the city and the HDP to have no parliamentarians. More examples of changing parliamentary distribution caused by alliances can be given, but the net result of alliances has been the loss suffered by parties who entered the election without alliances.

Concluding Remarks: Kurdish Votes Do Not Act as a Bloc as Intra-regional Differences Prevail

The June 24 elections once again showed that the Kurdish citizens of Turkey do not vote as a bloc. After all, a homogenous social structure is not observable in the region. Not only is the region divided into different ethnic groups such

While the party organization in the region was significantly weakened by Turkey's counter-terrorism operations, the value and functionality of the HDP has become questionable due to the continuing terror wave created by the PKK

Turkish identities, some feel they are completely and exclusively a part of an exclusive Zaza identity.

In this situation, the answer to the question “Who did the Kurds vote for?” becomes more difficult as the issue of ethnic identity is a question of social psychology, not genetics.³⁴ Partly for this reason, this analysis offers information regarding the votes of a geographical region, the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey and the Hatay province, rather than the Kurdish people. It is seen that cities like Hakkari, Şırnak and Mardin which have continued familial ties with Iraq and Syria and provinces like Diyarbakır and Van which receive migration from these cities have higher voting percentages for the HDP. On the other hand, the AK Party is prevalent in cities with large Zaza populations like Elazığ and Bingöl and industrialized cities like Malatya and Gaziantep, both demographically more cosmopolitan and more developed in terms of commerce.

Moreover, the electoral diversity in the region is not only ethnolinguistic but also ethno-religious. These cleavages cut across ethnic identity groups which are perceived by many as being mutually exclusive. For example, the continuing CHP-HDP competition for Alevi votes is important. While the CHP lost its eastern Alevi votes to the HDP in the June 7, 2015 elections, some of these voters returned to the CHP in the November 1, 2015 elections.³⁵ In addition to these micro-ethnic, linguistic and religious differentiations, the religious-secular distinction has been another decisive factor for Kurdish votes. This fault line is particularly effective in the differentiation of the HÜDA-PAR and the HDP amongst the Kurdish nationalist voters.

In addition to these long-term and structural factors, many conjunctural and temporary factors such as the increase in the terrorist acts of the PKK in certain districts, the candidate profiles of parties in specific election regions, and local reflections of the general economic state of affairs of the country keep the Kurdish votes from moving as a bloc. It is very clear that the bipolar structure (AK Party-HDP binary) will continue in the region. While not as certain, it

as Turkish, Arab, Kurdish, and Zaza but also the borders between these ethnic groups are undefined. For example, while some Kurds perceive their identity to be exclusive with the Turkish identity, some do not consider the two as mutually exclusive. The same transience is also valid for the triangle of Zaza, Turk, and Kurd. While there are those who consider their Zaza identity to be compatible with their Kurdish or

can also be predicted that the decline of the HDP votes in the region is likely to continue. While the party organization in the region was significantly weakened by Turkey's counter-terrorism operations, the value and functionality of the HDP has become questionable due to the continuing terror wave created by the PKK. In such an atmosphere, it can be seen that the AK Party has stopped the rise of the HDP in the region, which had experienced its peak in the June 7, 2015 elections. In a nutshell, the HDP failed to monopolize Turkey's Kurdish votes in the June 24 elections and the AK Party can still significantly appeal to Turkey's Kurds. ■

Endnotes

1. While the 1946 general elections were multi-party elections as well, the secret ballot principle was reversed, although ballots were cast openly, they were not counted as such. See also, Ensar Yılmaz, "1950 Seçimlerinin Önemi, Öne Çıkan Özellikleri ve Siyasal Sonuçları [The Significance, Prominent Features and Political Results of the 1950 Elections]," *Bartın Üniversitesi İ.İ.B.F. Dergisi*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2010), p. 31.
2. About the presidential system adopted by the 2017 referendum see also, Ali Aslan, "Türkiye İçin Başkanlık Sistemi: Demokratikleşme, İstikrar, Kurumsallaşma [Presidential System for Turkey: Democratization, Stability, Institutionalization]," *SETA*, No. 122 (April 2015), retrieved from http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20150405220930_turkiye-icin-baskanlik-sistemi-demokratikleşme-istikrar-kurumsallaşma.pdf; Nebi Miş and Ali Aslan, "Erdoğan Siyaseti ve Kurucu Cumhurbaşkanlığı Misyonu [Erdoğan's Politics and Mission of Founding Presidency]," *SETA*, No. 109 (September 2014), retrieved from <https://www.setav.org/erdogan-siyaseti-ve-kurucu-cumhurbaskanligi-misyonu/>; Burhanettin Duran and Nebi Miş, "The Transformation of Turkey's Political System and the Executive Presidency," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2016), pp. 11-28; Gülgün Erdoğan Tosun, "Reconsidering the Presidential System in Turkey," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2016), pp. 127-142.
3. "Meral Akşener: Demirtaş Serbest Bırakılsın, [Meral Akşener: Set Demirtaş Free]," *Yeni Şafak*, (May 30, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.yenisafak.com/video-galeri/secim/meral-aksener-selahattin-demirtas-serbest-birakilsin-2178924>.
4. "Muharrem İnce, Cezaevinde Demirtaş'ı Ziyaret Etti, [Muharrem İnce Visited Demirtaş in Prison]," *Hürriyet*, (May 9, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2018/gundem/muharrem-ince-cezaevinde-demirtasi-ziyaret-etti-2397506>.
5. For more specific analysis of these reviews, please see, <https://thenewturkey.org/author/huseyin-alptekin>.
6. The AK Party competed with the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) in 2002 general elections. DEHAP entered the 2004 local elections not as a party by itself but under the name of Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) due to an electoral alliance. The 2007 general elections witnessed a competition in the region between the AK Party and Democratic Society Party (DTP) competing independently under the label of Thousand Hope Candidates. While the 2009 general elections also witnessed a competition in the region between the AK Party and the DTP, Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the representative of the ethnic Kurdish political movement at the time, competed with independent candidates in the 2011 general elections and called its list "Labor, Democracy and Freedom Bloc." Ethnic Kurdish politicians entered the 2014 local elections with the HDP in the Western provinces and with the BDP in the eastern provinces. The movement used the name "HDP" throughout the country in all three elections held since the June 7, 2015 general elections and continues its activities with this name. For a review of this period, please see, Hüseyin Alptekin, "2015 Seçimine Giderken Halkların Demokratik Partisi'nin (HDP) Siyasal İletişim Performansı [Political Communication Performance of Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) en Route to 2015 Election]," in İsmail Çağlar and Yusuf Özkır (eds.), *Türkiye'de Siyasal İletişim: 2007-2015 [Political Communication in Turkey: 2007-2015]*, (İstanbul: SETA, 2015).
7. Hüseyin Alptekin and Talha Köse, "AK Parti'nin Kürt Politikası [AK Party's Kurdish Policy]," in Nebi Miş and Ali Aslan (eds.), *AK Parti'nin 15 Yılı: Siyaset [15 Years of AK Party: Politics]*, (İstanbul: SETA, 2018).

8. Hasan Kösebalaban, "The Impact of Globalization on Islamic Political Identity: The Case of Turkey," *World Affairs*, Vol. 168, No. 1 (2005), pp. 27-37.
9. Alptekin and Köse, "AK Parti'nin Kürt Politikası," p. 318; Taha Özhan and Hatem Ete, "Kürt Meselesi: Problemler ve Çözüm Önerileri [Kurdish Issue: Problems and Suggestions]," *SETA*, (November 2008), retrieved from <https://www.setav.org/kurt-meselesi-problemler-ve-cozum-onerileri/>.
10. Alptekin and Köse, "AK Parti'nin Kürt Politikası," p. 323.
11. Law No. 5767, "Amendment to the Turkish Radio and Television Law and Laws that Regulate the Establishment and Broadcasts of Radio and Televisions," *Official Gazette*, (June 11, 2008).
12. For a detailed study on the stages on Turkey's fight against the PKK see, Hüseyin Alptekin, *Etnik Terör Örgütleri ve Terörle Mücadele: IRA, ETA, Tamil Kaplanları ve PKK [Ethnic Terrorist Organizations and Counter Terrorism: IRA, ETA, Tamil Tigers and the PKK]*, (Istanbul: SETA, 2018).
13. Talha Köse, "Identity Dynamics of the June and November 2015 Elections of Turkey: Kurds, Alevi and Conservative Nationalists," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2015), p. 106.
14. Mehmet Bardakçı, "2015 Parliamentary Elections in Turkey: Demise and Revival of AKP's Single-Party Rule," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2016), pp. 4-18.
15. Matthijs Bogaards, "Counting Parties and Identifying Dominant Party Systems in Africa," *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (2004), pp. 173-197; Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Kenneth F. Greene, "The Political Economy of Authoritarian Single-Party Dominance," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 7 (2010), pp. 807-834; Hatem Ete, Mustafa Altunoğlu, and Galip Dalay, "Turkey under the AK Party Rule: From Dominant Party Politics to Dominant Party System?" *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2015), pp. 171-192.
16. Raúl L. Madrid, *The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 6. For ethnic parties, see also, Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Donna Lee Van Cott, "Institutional Change and Ethnic Parties in South America," *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2003), pp. 1-39; John Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning, "What's in a Name? Ethnic Party Identity and Democratic Development in Post-communist Politics," *Party Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2011), pp. 223-241.
17. For the use of this term, see HDP MP Ayhan Bilgen and party co-chairman Sezai Temelli's speeches. For Bilgen's use of the term, see, "HDP'nin Yol Haritası Değişti," *Birgün*, (July 29, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/hdp-nin-yol-haritasi-kurt-sorunu-degisti-225076.html>. For Temelli's use of the term, see, "Temelli: Kesintisiz Bir Demokrasi, Barış ve Çözüm Mücadelesi Başladı," *HDP*, (February 23, 2018), retrieved from <http://www.hdp.org.tr/tr/guncel/makale-ve-roportajlar/temelli-kesintisiz-bir-demokrasi-baris-ve-cozum-mucadelesi-basladi/11667>.
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26. This organization is active within the borders of Turkey and has nothing in common with Hezbollah in Lebanon other than the similarity of the name.
27. The term refers to the global Muslim community, which crosscuts the national boundaries.
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30. These cities are chosen because of the predominance of the Kurdish population in them (Kilis can be considered an exception). Additionally, they appear on the maps of the imaginary PKK state, representing the cities to be separated from Turkey. In other words, this is the area that the PKK calls Bakur (Northern) Kurdistan. In fact, the map is even conservative because some PKK maps also include cities such as Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye and Sivas where the HDP has not had any promising results. For detailed analysis of the maps see, Hüseyin Alptekin, "What to Make of the June 24 Elections in Eastern Turkey," *The New Turkey*, (June 30, 2018), retrieved from <https://thenewturkey.org/what-to-make-from-the-june-24-elections-in-eastern-turkey/>.
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32. Voting to block the AK Party's majority in the parliament by holding the HDP over a 10 percent election threshold. Although this was intended for the strategic voting of CHP base in Turkey, the reverse is possible and ethnic party voters can also use their votes strategically. About ethnic parties and strategic vote see, Kanchan Chandra, "Why Voters in Patronage Democracies Split Their Tickets: Strategic Voting for Ethnic Parties," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2009), pp. 21-32.
33. It should also be acknowledged that individual-level survey data would provide a stronger basis for this claim by avoiding the problem of ecological fallacy. Hence, the vote transfer can be observed at district level but one has the right to doubt about individual voters' shifts. While we lack detailed surveys on the subject, two polling companies, Metropoll and KONDA also expressed the vote shift from the CHP to the HDP in parallel to the conclusion of this article. While Metropoll claims that 350 thousand votes shifted from the CHP to the HDP, Konda claims that, at most, 0.9 points of 11.7 vote share of the HDP came from the CHP base. For a discussion and critique of the Metropoll results see Vahap Coşkun, "24 Haziran (5): HDP'nin Oyu Kimin Oyu?" *Kurdistan 24*, (June 24, 2018), retrieved from <http://www.kurdistan24.net/tr/opinion/8503d24f-5564-4c95-8ea9-7e3be70a3143>. For a summary of the KONDA report, see "Konda'dan 24 Haziran Analizi: CHP'den HDP'ye 0.9 Oranında Oy Gitti," *Sputnik Türkiye*, (July 31, 2018), retrieved from <https://tr.sputniknews.com/analiz/201807311034538401-konda-haziran-secim-analizi/>.
34. See, Henri Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 2014); Vamik D. Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity," *Group Analysis*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2001), pp. 79-97.
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NATION REFUSES TO SURRENDER TO GÜLENIST COUP ATTEMPT

Polarization. Terrorism. Political infighting. Regional crises. These were the main topics of discussion before Friday night put everything in perspective. The Turkish nation may disagree about its future. But when the push came to shove, it showed it was certain about what it did not want, flooding the streets against the coup attempt by the military followers of a narrow-minded cult leader on Friday night

TURKS PAKSOY - ISTANBUL
TURKEY witnessed a disgraceful night in terms of respect for democracy and the people's will after Gülenist soldiers and military officers staged an illegitimate coup attempt. Fighter jets flying over the capital Ankara and Istanbul all night, opened fire on civilians and bombed Parliament. The Gülenist shame-doubled the Gülenist military of Despite the Gülenist military officers trying to drug the country into chaos, the Turkish people's will and resolution to defend democracy and the democratically elected president and government helped repel the coup attempt. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım's pleas for citizens to take to the streets and stand up for democracy led to a country-wide resistance against the coup attempt. "I invite our nation to squares. I have not seen a stronger force than the nation," President Erdoğan said on live TV shortly after the coup attempt started across the country. "Those who attempted this mad-ness will pay the heaviest price," Prime Minister Yıldırım said live on TV. Millions of people flocked to squares and streets to say "no" to the putschists. People got on to tanks, disarmed coup soldiers and took back control of raided institutions. Gülenist fighter jet pilots and helicopters opened fire on people and bombed Parliament. In addition, tanks drove toward people on the streets and ran over many. *mas e*



ERDOĞAN'S CALL MOBILIZES THE NATION

PRESIDENT RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN, who was on a family vacation when tanks rolled into the streets of Ankara and Istanbul, flew to Istanbul every year and declared an end to the coup attempt. He said those responsible will pay a heavy price for their treason. It was his call on the public to demonstrate their opposition to the development soon after Gülenist officers in the military launched the coup that mobilized the nation and forced the guilty soldiers to retreat. *mas e*

DECLARATION AT MACHINE GUN POINT AT TRT

ONE OF THE FIRST stops Gülenist soldiers made on Friday night was at the state broadcaster Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), where plotters made an obviously terrified anchor read a coup declaration. TRT's Deputy Director-General İbrahim Eröz said the presenter, İğne Karam, was forced to read the declaration after being threatened with machine guns. *mas e*

EXTRADITION OF MAN BEHIND THE COUP ATTEMPT



EDITORIAL

PRIME MINISTER BINALI YILDIRIM: WE WILL CARRY THIS UNITY INTO THE FUTURE

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