

Turkey at a Crossroads: What Do the Gezi Park Protests Mean for Democracy in the Region? (Part 2)

by [James Jeffrey \(/experts/james-jeffrey\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Ambassador is a former U.S. special representative for Syria engagement and former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and Iraq; from 2013-2018 he was the Philip Solondz Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute. He currently chairs the Wilson Center's Middle East Program.



Articles & Testimony

The Institute's Philip Solondz distinguished visiting fellow addressed the House regarding Turkey's ongoing mass protests. The following is an excerpt from his prepared remarks; [download the PDF to read the full testimony](#). [Also read Soner Cagaptay's testimony before the same panel. \(<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/turkey-at-a-crossroads-what-do-the-gezi-park-protests-mean-for-democracy-in>\)](#)

"The demonstrations that broke out in Gezi Park and Taksim Square in Istanbul in late May represent the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Erdogan's AK Party rule in the eleven years the party has been in power. That said, the demonstrations do not indicate a serious erosion of support for the prime minister and his party, although his popularity has dropped somewhat in recent polls. Thus it is highly unlikely that the demonstrations will lead to the toppling of the AKP government, or early elections, now scheduled for 2015.

"But what the demonstrations, and the government's reaction to them, do show is that Turkey is increasingly split into two quite different political groupings, and that the government might be contributing to further polarization of the society. This is the situation of greatest concern to those of us who have worked with and follow Turkey closely..." ❖

House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats

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