

The Other Turkish Model

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MEMO

To: The Muslim Brotherhood

From: A Fellow Muslim

Dear Brother,

As you prepare to run in Egypt's first free elections -- Inshallah, you will win -- I am writing to make recommendations for your success, drawing from the Turkish model. Do not get me wrong; I am not referring to Turkey's secularism or its earlier march toward a liberal democracy. Rather, I have in mind for you the other Turkish model, namely the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, government's successful crackdown on the media after being elected in 2002, ensuring nearly a decade of unbroken AKP rule in Turkey. I wish the same and more to you in Egypt. So, brother, please follow these recommendations:

First, align with some liberals who will support you and your policies. In 2002, the AKP promised the liberals a paradise if they defended the party's policies to eliminate the military's role in politics. Some liberals helped the AKP to this end, supporting the party while it launched the Ergenekon investigation to prosecute an alleged coup plot that was said to be orchestrated by the military, journalists, scholars and others.

Arrest journalists by connecting them to an alleged coup plot or other purported misconduct. This will help you intimidate the media. The AKP has implemented this goal successfully, especially targeting *Cumhuriyet*, which has been steadfast and often alone in its criticism of the party since 2002. In March 2009, the police arrested *Cumhuriyet's* Ankara bureau chief Mustafa Balbay in connection to the alleged Ergenekon plot. The government has also targeted Oda TV, the country's most prominent independent online portal. Soner Yalcin, the portal's editor, was detained along with three other journalists in February 2011.

Wiretap independent media and journalists. You have intimidated everyone by now, so you do not even need an excuse. The Freedom House Report for 2010 in Turkey states that the police have wiretapped mainstream and independent dailies, such as *Milliyet* and *Hurriyet*, as well as *Cumhuriyet*. The police said that such wiretaps, which took place without a court order, were justified, for "the papers were allegedly connected to the Ergenekon coup plot." While you are at it, throw in a few wiretaps of your opponents. Under the AKP, the police also wiretapped, without a court order, conversations between *Cumhuriyet* correspondent Ilhan Tasci and Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the chair of the main opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, in February 2009. The former deputy chief of the national police, Chief Emin Aslan, confirmed that the police have been wiretapping journalists, as well as politicians, judges, and civil servants. Aslan also confirmed that the police wiretapped *Milliyet* in August 2008. What happened when news broke out that the government wiretapped a major newspaper and judges? Nothing. As I said, at this stage, everyone will be afraid of you.

Then, pass the media into the hands of pro-government businesses. Learn from the AKP, my brother: in 2002, pro-AKP businesses owned less than 20 percent of the Turkish media; today, pro-government businesses own around 50 percent and that percentage will increase further. To this end, the party has used and will use legal loopholes to transfer ownership of the media companies. Take for instance, the story of Sabah-ATV, Turkey's second-largest media conglomerate. The government first charged Sabah-ATV's owners with improper business practices and then passed control of the company to a national regulator. The regulator then sold the media group at an auction with only one bidder: Calik Holding, a conglomerate well-known for being an AKP supporter. Calik then appointed Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's son-in-law Berat Albayrak as his media group's new CEO. Subsequently, Erdogan's son-in-law paid the government \$1.25 billion just last year for this deal, having obtained loans from public banks Halkbank and Vakifbank. The media reported that Qatari investors supported Calik's purchase, as well. You see, brother: you can do it if you put your mind to it.

Next, pass restrictive media laws. Follow the AKP and adopt an opaque new media regulation law, open to interpretation and abuse. For instance, the new media law, passed by the AKP on Feb. 15, 2011, stipulates that Turkey's official broadcast watchdog, Radio and Television Higher Council, or RTUK, a majority of whose board members are appointed by the AKP, "can determine the principles of measuring the percentage of homes watching or listening to the broadcasting services and apply sanctions to companies and organizations that do not comply with the principles." This gives you the opportunity to not only control the media but also dangle the Sword of Damocles over the Internet -- you have to be careful with the Internet!

Trust me; you can have it all in the end. The new law asserts: "In cases where national security or public order is seriously deteriorated, the prime minister or the minister he appoints can temporarily ban broadcasting."

Finally, arrest the liberals. Since you no longer require their support, you can go ahead and arrest those conspicuous liberals who have served their purpose. On March 3, 2011, AKP-controlled national police arrested a number of prominent journalists, among them Ahmet Sik, whose investigative work in 2007 helped the AKP launch the Ergenekon case. Too bad for him, but he did serve his purpose for us -- such is life! At this stage, no target is too big: the police also arrested Nedim Sener, an investigative reporter for daily *Milliyet* and a recipient of the International Press Institute's "World Press Freedom Hero" award. The police charged Sener and other journalists for their alleged participation in the Ergenekon coup plot.

By now, brother, you have the country under full, unbridled control, and trust me: you will win the coming elections. For, while elections will continue to be free, in the absence of independent media they will be far from fair. Follow my advice, brother, and you are sure to succeed.

Soner Cagaptay is director of the [Turkish Research Program \(/templateI02.php?](#)

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