

# The Sick Man of Europe

by Gary Fouse



For a country that has been trying to get into the European Union for years, the current government of Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdogan is hardly acting like a friend to the Europeans let alone a responsible member of NATO. Erdogan is determined to remove the secularism established in Turkey under its national hero, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and bring Islam into the forefront of the nation's life. His ministry of religious affairs has encouraged the Turkish diaspora's mosques in Belgium and Germany to spy on the Turkish communities for opposition to his rule. He has caused deep damage to the ties that had existed with the state of Israel. In addition, he has facilitated the movement of ISIS fighters across his border into Syria and complicated the efforts of the US to help fight ISIS. In addition, Erdogan has facilitated the movement of so-called refugees into Western Europe through Turkish territory. After reaching a deal with the Europeans to restrict the flow, he is now threatening to open his borders again.

If that isn't enough, Erdogan is now attempting to openly campaign for a referendum giving him expanded powers in Turkey

among the millions of Turks living in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland whose votes he hopes to gain. That has been met with resistance among these countries for obvious reasons. Instead of respecting the sovereignty of these nations, Erdogan is [reacting with anger](#), accusing them of being “Nazis” and “fascists”.

As I write this, the Netherlands has banned a flight to Rotterdam on Saturday by Turkey’s foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu. That has been met with [threats of retaliation](#) by Turkey.

Meanwhile, [two cantons](#) in Switzerland have told Cavusoglu that he could not hold rallies in their jurisdictions on Sunday, March 12.

Finally, the chancellor of [Austria](#), Christian Kern, has called for a European-wide ban on Turkish campaigning.

On Saturday night, the issue came to a head when the Turkish minister of family and social affairs, was stopped, and detained in Rotterdam as her convoy was attempting to reach the Turkish consulate after crossing the border from Germany. She and her convoy were escorted back to Germany as hundreds of Turks showed up to protest in front of the consulate, a protest that had to be broken up with water cannons. Where this now goes is anybody’s guess.

For me it is personally sad to see where Turkey is going. I visited that country in the 1980s twice and enjoyed it and its people. Under this regime, Turkey is wearing out its welcome with the West, and I regret that the recent coup attempt failed. Turkey is a strategically important country, but is hardly a trustworthy NATO ally under Erdogan, a situation that Russia and Vladimir Putin will likely exploit. In addition, an increasing number of Turks are being drawn to Islamic extremism. As long as Erdogan is around, it’s hard to envision closer relations with the West.