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SWEDISH AID IN THE ERA OF SHRINKING SPACE – THE CASE OF TURKEY

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Acknowledgements

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Foreword by the EBA

The space for freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, and for civil society is gradually shrinking in many countries in the world. This trend of shrinking democratic space is manifested in various ways in different parts of the world, and affects the work of academics, journalists, lawyers, teachers, authors and public civil servants. We witness threats against minorities, against women in a new form of misogynism, threats and restricted rights for the LGBTQI community, as well as attempts to silence the press and oppositional movements. With shrinking space, civil society in different places of the world is going through difficult times, and its work is made difficult and dangerous. One of the countries where change towards increasing authoritarianism and repressive forms of government is rapidly taking place is Turkey. Turkish academics and civil society members have been subject to dismissal from their positions and restraints in their work, in a sweeping purge. Civil society organizations find themselves harassed and subject to arbitrary and non-transparent measures. All of this threatens democracy and human rights, prioritized areas for Swedish development cooperation with Turkey. In focus of this cooperation is support to civil society organizations.

In 2017, Sida made a midterm review of its development cooperation with Turkey. The review concluded that adjustments in implementation is needed to reach the goals. In the light of this, several important questions were raised. How does the trend towards authoritarianism in Turkey affect forms and content of Swedish development cooperation? How is development cooperation designed in an era of shrinking democratic space? How are rapid changes handled? And how can cooperation be best evaluated?

This EBA report studies the effects of the shrinking democratic space for Swedish aid in Turkey. The study is an important contribution to this debate as it focuses on the following questions: What does the shrinking democratic space in Turkey entail for civil society organizations working on topics of importance for democracy, human rights and gender equality? Has Swedish

development/reform cooperation with Turkey adapted adequately to this challenging context? The authors, Åsa Eldén and Paul Levin, analyze the difficulties that civil society organizations experience in their work, connected to arbitrariness and non-transparency of measures by the regime.

There are several important conclusions from the study, that also go beyond the Turkish case. One of the most central ones is that despite the challenges, it is important that Swedish aid continue to support civil society and NGOs in times of shrinking democratic space. The authors suggest that organizations that work actively to reduce the growing polarization in Turkey and those working with human rights should be prioritized. Sustainable support can possibly pave the ground for a swifter path to a democratic development in the longer-term perspective. A shrinking democratic space will affect both forms and content of the Swedish international development cooperation. It is my hope that this report will shed light on the important questions we are facing in an era where civil rights are increasingly under threat.

The work has been conducted in dialogue with a reference group chaired by me, Helena Lindholm, chair of the EBA. The analysis and conclusions expressed in this report are solely those of the authors.

Gothenburg, November 2018

Helena Lindholm

Sammanfattning

Begreppet krympande utrymme beskriver en global trend där friheten för aktivister och civilsamhällesorganisationer kringskärs av alltmer repressiva och auktoritära regeringar. För det svenska utvecklingssamarbetet, med sin långa tradition av att definiera demokrati, rättssäkerhet, mänskliga rättigheter och jämställdhet som viktiga mål, är denna globala trend av krympande demokratiskt utrymme en stor utmaning.

Turkiet lyfts ofta fram som ett land där krympandet av det demokratiska utrymmet har varit särskilt snabbt och dramatiskt. Svenskt bistånd till Turkiet, med sitt övergripande syfte att stödja de turkiska EU-förhandlingarna genom reformer för att stärka demokrati, mänskliga rättigheter, jämställdhet och rättssäkerhet har i hög grad påverkats av denna trend. Givet att EU-förhandlingarna just nu *de facto* är frusna, och att Turkiets auktoritära metoder har medfört signifikanta restriktioner för de civilsamhällesorganisationer som är mottagare av svenskt bistånd, har Sverige sett sig nödgat att justera implementeringen av strategin för reformsamarbetet med Turkiet.

Denna studie ger dels en uppdatering av hur det krympande utrymmet ser ut i Turkiet och vilken betydelse detta har för civilsamhällesorganisationer, dels en evaluering av hur det svenska utvecklings/reformsamarbetet med Turkiet har anpassats till denna situation. Rapporten söker svar på två relaterade forskningsfrågor:

1. Vilken betydelse har det krympande utrymmet för civilsamhällesorganisationer som arbetar med frågor som är centrala för demokrati, mänskliga rättigheter och jämställdhet?
2. Har svenskt utvecklings/reformsamarbete på ett adekvat sätt anpassat sig till denna utmanande kontext?

Genom att svara på dessa frågor, och med utgångspunkt i våra fältstudier i Turkiet, hoppas vi att denna rapport kan kasta nytt ljus på en fråga som kan vara av brett intresse, nämligen hur ett krympande demokratiskt utrymme påverkar civilsamhällesaktörer och människorättsförsvarare i ett land som genomgår en auktoritär

transformation. Hur upplever människor "i frontlinjen" dessa förändringar och vad menar de att internationella aktörer bör göra? Hur ser internationella (i vårt fall svenska) biståndsaktörer på sin roll och sitt möjliga bidrag? Studien lägger särskild vikt vid ett jämställdhetsperspektiv på det krympande utrymmet, i linje med de svenska prioriteringarna i utvecklingssamarbetet, som ytterligare stärkts med den feministiska utrikespolitiken.

Studien bygger på en kombination av kvalitativa metoder. För att svara på den första forskningsfrågan om vilken betydelse det krympande demokratiska utrymmet i Turkiet har för civilsamhällesaktörer har vi studerat nyhetsmaterial och tidigare forskning samt genomfört intervjuer med nästan fyrtio representanter för ett brett spektra av rättighetsbaserade civilsamhällesorganisationer. För att svara på den andra forskningsfrågan om hur det svenska biståndet har anpassat sig, har vi studerat regeringsskrivelser, rapporter och interna översyner, och kompletterat denna dokumentanalys genom intervjuer med aktörer vilka representerar Sverige som givare.

Det krympande demokratiska utrymmet för civilsamhället är ett begrepp som används för att beskriva en global trend av hastigt – och i vissa kontexter dramatiskt – försämrade förutsättningar för det civila samhället; hur yttrande-, åsikts-, mötes- och föreningsfrihet kringskärs. Förutom civilsamhället drabbas även oberoende media, universitet och rättsliga institutioner av allvarliga bakslag och restriktioner i många kontexter. Även om dessa trender inte nödvändigtvis är nya i substans, gör omfattningen av de förändringar vi ser idag, liksom de tydliga paralleller som olika kontexter uppvisar, att det är relevant att tala om en global trend där en demokratisk tillbakagång och ett krympande utrymme går hand i hand.

De tretton år som AKP (Rättvise- och utvecklingspartiet/*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) suttit vid makten i Turkiet har präglats både av initiala förbättringar för många civilsamhällesorganisationer, och av en numera påtaglig nedåtgående trend för mänskliga rättigheter och respekt för demokratiska principer. Under de senaste åren, med Geziprotesterna 2013 och kuppförsöket 2016 som viktiga vändpunkter och katalysatorer, har det demokratiska utrymmet

krympt dramatiskt. Idag känner i stort sett alla civilsamhälles-organisationer av trycket, såvida de inte står nära AKP eller dess allierade. Denna utveckling har bekräftats i omfattande kvalitativ forskning och är synlig i kvantitativa jämförande index över frihet, pressfrihet och rättssäkerhet.

Bilden av Turkiet som en plats för ett dramatiskt krympande demokratiskt utrymme bekräftas av vår studie. Om det finns ett ord som bäst summerar situationen är det godtycklighet. Denna godtycklighet inkluderar rädsla för de godtyckliga arresteringar och stängningar som utgör kärnan i det krympande utrymmet i dagens Turkiet, men den sträcker sig också långt vidare. Godtyckligheten överskuggar många aspekter av civilsamhällets vardagsliv och skapar en genomgripande känsla av osäkerhet och rädsla för att vem som helst, utan att ha gjort någonting fel eller olagligt, kan drabbas härnäst, vilket gör det svårt att planera för framtiden. Godtycklig repression förstärker också fragmentiseringen och polariseringen i den turkiska civilsamhällessfären, vilket gör många aktivister och civilsamhällesorganisationer isolerade.

De metoder som regeringen använder för att krympa utrymmet är många. De inkluderar återkommande och omfattande inspek-tioner, revisioner och utredningar, böter, stängningar, polisvåld (och i sydöstra Turkiet även militärt våld), mediakampanjer och uppvigling till protester och våld mot rättighetsaktivister och anställda i civilsamhällesorganisationer. Det omfattar också fientliga övertaganden av styrelser och användandet av "GONGOs" (regeringsstyrda icke-statliga organisationer) för att tränga ut oberoende organisationer. I och med de utrensningar av anställda i den offentliga administrationen som skedde efter kuppen har civilsamhället också förlorat många kontaktpersoner inom staten, vilket ytterligare har försvårat deras arbete.

Utrymmet för det civila samhället i Turkiet har krympt ojämnt och repressionen har drabbat olika arenor och grupper på olika sätt och vid olika tillfällen. Civilsamhällesorganisationer och aktivister som arbetar med kurdiska frågor i Turkiet har sedan länge varit utsatta för stängningar, arresteringar, våld och andra former av restriktioner. Dessa är också bland de som drabbas hårdast i den nuvarande situationen. Efter kuppförsöket 2016 stängdes

organisationer och fängslades människor som påstods ha kopplingar till Gülenrörelsen, som många ansåg låg bakom kuppförsöket. I det alltmer konservativa politiska klimatet hotas redan uppnådda rättigheter, flera av dem etablerade under AKP-regeringen. Detta har fått långtgående konsekvenser särskilt för kvinnor och HBTQI-personer, och förändringar i regeringens policy kommer högst sannolikt att få konsekvenser under lång tid framöver.

När vi ser på hur organisationer som arbetar med kvinno- och HBTQI-frågor påverkats, ser konsekvenserna olika ut. Civil-samhällesorganisationer som arbetar med HBTQI-personers rättigheter har drabbats av verksamhetsförbud såväl som hot och våld, och för dessa organisationer är det är allt svårare att verka öppet. Kvinnorättsorganisationer å andra sidan har i allmänhet sluppit de tuffaste formerna av repression (organisationer i sydöstra Turkiet undantagna), och även om det finns en rädsla för att de kommer att drabbas hårdare framöver har de fortfarande ett handlingsutrymme. Kvinnoorganisationer finns bland de organi-sationer som påverkas mest av ett växande antal GONGOs. Dessa slukar resurser såväl som representation i internationella fora, utgör en kontrollmekanism och driver en ideologi som går stick i stäv med internationella överenskommelser om jämställdhet.

Tre typer av aktörer som inte faller inom ramen för en traditionell definition av civilsamhället har drabbats synnerligen hårt i det krympande demokratiska utrymmet i Turkiet. Mediaorganisationer och journalister har utsatts för hårt tryck i flera olika former, rättssäkerheten är hotad och jurister drabbas av omfattande utrensningar och påtvingad självcensur. Flera tusen akademiker har förlorat sina jobb och den akademiska friheten är kringskuren. Tillslagen mot dessa tre grupper har långtgående och långsiktiga konsekvenser för civilsamhället såväl som för hela det turkiska samhället.

Trots att dagens situation i Turkiet har skapat en tillvaro med extrem stress, finner organisationer och individer ständigt nya vägar. De använder det handlingsutrymme som fortfarande finns och skapar nya utrymmen på nya arenor. Civilsamhällesorganisationer har gjort förändringar när det gäller vilka projekt de arbetar med, modifierat syften och sänkt förväntningarna på prestation och

resultat. Många är också upptagna av att hantera sin egen säkerhet och organisationens överlevnad, och har tvingats anpassa sina aktiviteter till vilka ämnen som anses oproblematiska. Även om detta alltid har varit fallet för vissa civilsamhällesorganisationer i Turkiet, har godtyckligheten och oförutsägbarheten medfört att det idag blivit svårare att anpassa sig. Det finns en ökad risk att bli 'fläckad' till följd av samarbete med andra, om dina samarbetspartners plötsligt hamnar i regeringens skottglugg. Detta påverkar valet av samarbetspartner bland turkiska organisationer, men också relationen till internationella organisationer och utländska bilaterala givare. Paradoxalt nog har det krympande utrymmet gett vissa organisationer verksamma inom rättighetsfältet, exempelvis de som arbetar med pressfrihet, mer arbete. Eftersom repressionen har drabbat olika områden och grupper på olika sätt, använder de organisationer som fortfarande har ett handlings-utrymme (exempelvis kvinnoorganisationer) detta utrymme aktivt, och de har varit centrala för motståndskraften i civilsamhället som helhet.

I ljuset av denna demokratiska tillbakagång gjorde Sida i sin halvtidsgenomgång av nuvarande strategi för reformsamarbetet med Turkiet flera justeringar i implementeringen. Utgångspunkten är fortsatta EU-förhandlingar med Turkiet, men nu formulerad som förberedelse för en återupptagen process. Nya partners ska sökas i civilsamhället, bland organisationer som arbetar med jämställdhet, HBTQI-rättigheter, mänskliga rättigheter och demokrati inklu-derande yttrandefrihet, medan samarbete med regeringen ska ha lägre prioritet. Sida uppmärksammar ett behov av ytterligare flexibilitet i portföljen, med kortsiktig överlevnad i fokus.

Vår studie visar att det svenska biståndet i Turkiet är ytterst betydelsefullt, och än mer så när det demokratiska utrymmet krymper. Möjligheten för oberoende civilsamhällesorganisationer som inte är regeringstrogna att få inhemskt finansiellt stöd har mer eller mindre försvunnit, och få internationella givare ger den sorts långsiktiga kärnstöd som Sverige gör. Sverige har också ett gott rykte som givare, och beskrivs som flexibel, öppen för dialog om förändringar av syften och praktikaliteter, mer intresserad av resultat än detaljer, och med kunskap om den nuvarande situationen i Turkiet.

Rapporten beskriver den modell som svenskt reformsamarbete i Turkiet använder, och som är en unik modell i svenskt bistånd. Den svenska modellen i Turkiet kombinerar större, långsiktiga kärnstöd via Ambassaden i Ankara med små och kortfristiga projektstöd som syftar till att starta upp och expandera verksamheten och går via Generalkonsulatet i Istanbul. Stödet via Ankara administreras av Sida med rigorösa förfaranden, medan stödet via Istanbul följer UD:s bestämmelser med en lättare administrativ börda för mottagare av stöd. De mindre stöden från Istanbul fungerar *de facto* som "etableringsstöd" som möjliggör för små civilsamhälles-organisationer att utöka sin erfarenhet och att växa, och för de mer livskraftiga av dessa att "uppgraderas" till kärnstöd i Ankara. Även om denna modell har högra overheadkostnader och är mer administrationstung, gör vi bedömningen att den är särskilt adekvat för den situation som just nu råder i Turkiet. Kombinationen av dessa två stöd öppnar upp för största möjliga flexibilitet. Detta eftersom den å ena sidan gör det möjligt till anpassning i en snabbt föränderlig kontext och stöd till små organisationer, och å andra sida skapar förutsättningar för de större organisationer som får kärnstöd att i dialog med givaren anpassa syften, mål och aktiviteter utan att behöva vara rädda att förlora sitt stöd.

Ett område där flexibiliteten blir kontraproduktiv är Sidas ansökningsprocess. I en situation där stressen ökar för civil-samhällesorganisationer, är frånvaron av tydliga instruktioner och förväntningar någonting som lägger onödig ytterligare börda på en redan extrem arbetssituation. Detta skulle lätt kunna åtgärdas genom en mer strukturerad ansökningsprocess och bättre information, kanske även kompletterat med möjlighet till ansök-ningar på turkiska (vilket EU-delegationen har gjort).

Utländskt bistånd är en potentiell men nödvändig risk i dagens Turkiet. Alla som tar emot utländskt bistånd kan anklagas för att vara agenter, men denna risk är högre om stödet kommer från en utländsk regering som betraktas som ofördelaktig av den turkiska regeringen. För närvarande utgör inte de bilaterala relationerna mellan Turkiet och Sverige ett dylikt problem även om detta förstås kan förändras snabbt. Trots det överväger fördelarna med biståndet de potentiella riskerna för mottagarna.

Vår viktigaste slutsats är att det svenska reformsamarbetet utgör ett betydelsefullt stöd till de aktörer som främjar demokratin i Turkiet. Trots det snabbt krympande demokratiska utrymmet, finns fortfarande många organisationer som arbetar aktivt för mänskliga rättigheter, kvinnors- och HBTQI-personers rättigheter, minoritets-rättigheter, oberoende media och forskning. Utan stöd från Sverige skulle en betydande del av detta arbete försvagas. Även om de mål som sätts upp i den nuvarande strategin inte kommer att kunna uppfyllas, är det möjligt att vara flexibel inom dess ram.

I linje med halvtidsgenomgången av strategin rekommenderar vi fortsatt stöd till organisationer som arbetar med mänskliga rättigheter och demokrati, inklusive yttrandefrihet, och för kvinnors- och HBTQI-personers rättigheter. Dessutom rekommenderar vi stöd till akademiker, eftersom dessa är nyckelaktörer för demokratin och civilsamhällets långsiktiga överlevnad. Vi rekommenderar initiativ till ett breddat partnerskap med syfte att motverka polarisering. Samtidigt är det viktigt att undvika stöd till GONGOs, eftersom dessa utgör ett av de redskap som regeringen använder för att krympa utrymmet för oberoende civilsamhälles-organisationer. Halvtidsgenomgången talar om ett skifte i fokus från regeringen som partner och mot civilsamhället. Vår studie ger i stort sett stöd till detta skifte, men pekar samtidigt mot att om det genomförs fullt ut skulle det medföra en ökad sårbarhet både för civilsamhällesaktörer och för det svenska biståndet till Turkiet som sådant. Att behålla ett begränsat stöd till exempelvis kapacitets-utveckling för offentliganställda inom mänskliga rättigheter och jämställdhet, kan vara ett sätt att bidra till att förbereda Turkiet för återtagna förhandlingar med EU, och göra stödet till civilsamhälles-organisationer mindre sårbart för regeringens restriktioner.

Sammanfattningsvis rekommenderar vi följande:

- Fortsätt och stärk Sveriges reformsamarbete med turkiska partner såväl kortsiktigt som långsiktigt. Det krympande demokratiska utrymmet i Turkiet gör stödet än mer relevant.

- I den nya strategin (från 2020), behåll och stärk de övergripande målen som inkluderar förberedelse för återupptagna EU-förhandlingar, demokrati, mänskliga rättigheter, jämställdhet, yttrandefrihet och rättssäkerhet.

- Bygg in en hög grad av flexibilitet i implementeringen av strategin, eftersom situationen i Turkiet med stor sannolik kommer att fortsätta vara föränderlig.

- Beakta fördelarna med att skriva en ny strategi specifikt för Turkiet, eftersom förutsättningarna för Turkiet är annorlunda än för Västra Balkan.

- Fortsätt att ge stöd till lokala små och medelstora organisationer som arbetar för demokrati och mänskliga rättigheter, med ett särskilt fokus på yttrandefrihet och kvinnors och HBTQI-personers rättigheter.

- Hitta dessutom vägar att stödja akademiker. Dessa är nyckelaktörer för civilsamhällets överlevnad och för demokratin i sin helhet i ett långsiktigt perspektiv.

- Ge stöd till organisationer och projekt som aktivt motverkar den växande polariseringen i Turkiet, och undersök möjligheten att bredda partnerskap.

- Fortsätt att stärka stödet till civilsamhället, men upphör inte helt med stöd som inkluderar regeringen/offentligt anställda som mottagare. Överväg möjligheten att flytta detta stöd till lägre nivåer, exempelvis kommuner, vid behov.

- Fortsätt utveckla den "turkiska stödmodellen" med en kombination av mindre etablerings/projektstöd ("seed funding") och större kärnstöd ("core funding").

- Överväg möjligheten att använda denna seed-core modell också i andra kontexter där det demokratiska utrymmet krymper.

- I dialog med partners, utveckla en metod eller ett format för tydligare instruktioner vid ansökningar, och överväg möjligheten att ta emot ansökningar på turkiska.

- Säkerställ att såväl Ambassaden, Generalkonsulatet och UD/Sida har tillräcklig kompetens om relevanta aspekter av den turkiska kontexten för att kunna hantera den nuvarande situationen.

Summary

The notion of a shrinking space describes a global trend whereby activists' and civil society organizations' freedom to organize and operate is circumscribed by increasingly repressive and authoritarian governments. From a Swedish development cooperation perspective, with its long tradition of defining democracy, rule of law, human rights and gender equality as important development goals, this era of shrinking democratic space constitutes a major challenge.

Turkey is often held up as an illustration of a country where the shrinking of democratic space has been particularly rapid and dramatic. Swedish aid to Turkey is heavily affected by this trend with its overall aim to support Turkish EU-accession through reforms aimed at strengthening democracy, human rights, gender equality, and the rule of law. Given that the EU-accession process is currently *de facto* frozen and that authoritarianization in Turkey has significantly restricted the ability of civil society to operate, Sweden has found it necessary to adjust the implementation of the strategy for reform cooperation with Turkey. This study offers an up-to-date account of the shrinking democratic space in Turkey and its effects on civil society organizations in Turkey, coupled with an evaluation of how well Swedish reform/development cooperation is adapted to this kind of situation. The report seeks to provide answers to two related research questions:

1. What does the shrinking democratic space in Turkey entail for civil society organizations working on topics of importance for democracy, human rights and gender equality?
2. Has Swedish development/reform cooperation with Turkey adapted adequately to this challenging context?

In responding to these questions and by virtue of our fieldwork in Turkey, the report hopes to shed light on a topic that should be of general interest, namely how the shrinking democratic space affects civil society actors and human rights activists in a country undergoing an authoritarian transition. How do the people on the "frontline" experience these changes, what do they think international actors should do, and how to these international (in

our case, Swedish) aid actors reflect on their role and possible contributions? The study gives particular attention to a gender perspective on the shrinking space, in line with Swedish priorities on gender equality in development cooperation, strengthened through the Feminist foreign policy.

The study relies on a combination of qualitative methods. First: In order to investigate the effects of the shrinking democratic space in Turkey on civil society actors, we have consulted news material and existing literature and have conducted interviews with almost 40 representatives from a broad range of rights-based civil society organizations (CSOs). Second: In order to evaluate the adaptation of Swedish reform cooperation with Turkey, we examined government policy documents, reports, and internal reviews, and supplemented this document analysis by interviewing representatives of Sweden as a donor.

The notion of a shrinking democratic space denotes a trend of rapidly – and in many contexts dramatically – changed preconditions for civil society, i.e. how freedom of expression, speech, assembly and association are being circumscribed. In addition to civil society actors, independent media, universities, and legal institutions also face serious setbacks and restrictions in many contexts. Even though these trends are not necessarily new in substance, today the magnitude of the changes and the similarities in different contexts makes it relevant to talk about a global trend in which a general democratic decline and a shrinking space for the civil society goes hand in hand.

The decade-and-half of the ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party/*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in Turkey has been characterized by initial improvements in the situation for many CSOs, as well as the now unmistakable downward trend in terms of human rights and respect for democratic principles. In recent years, with the Gezi protests in 2013 and the attempted coup in 2016 as important benchmarks, the democratic space has been shrinking dramatically. Today almost any civil society organization not affiliated with the ruling AKP or its allies feels the squeeze. This development has been corroborated extensively by qualitative

research and is visible in quantitative and comparative indexes on freedom, press freedom and the rule of law.

The image of Turkey as the site for a dramatically shrinking democratic space is confirmed by our study. If there is one word that best summarizes this situation, it is arbitrariness. This includes the fear of arbitrary arrests and closures that constitute the core of the shrinking space for civil society in Turkey today, but it goes further than that. It overshadows many aspects of everyday life in civil society and creates a pervasive sense of uncertainty and fear that anyone may be targeted next, despite having done nothing wrong or illegal, and it makes it very difficult to plan for the future. Arbitrary repression also reinforces the fragmentation in the Turkish civil society sphere, leaving many activists and CSOs increasingly isolated.

The instruments used by the government to shrink the space for civil society are many. They include intrusive inspections, audits and investigations, fines, closures, arrests, police (and, in Southeast Turkey, military) violence, media campaigns and incitement to societal protest and violence against rights activists and CSO workers, but also "hostile takeovers" of boards and the use of "GONGOs" (Government Organised Non-Governmental Organization) to crowd out independent CSOs. Through the massive post-coup purges in government agencies and ministries, many CSOs have also lost counterparts and contacts in the civil service, which has created additional obstacles to their work.

The space for civil society in Turkey has been shrinking unevenly and repression has hit different areas and groups in different ways and at different times. CSOs and activists who work on Kurdish affairs in Turkey have long faced closures, arrests, violence and other forms of restrictions, and they are also among the hardest targeted in the current situation. Following the attempted coup in 2016, a large number of associations with alleged links to the Gülen movement (which was accused by the government of being behind the coup attempt) were closed down, and people with links to this movement were jailed. In the increasingly conservative political climate of Turkey today, already achieved rights – many of them established in the early years of the AKP government – have been

threatened. This has had most far reaching consequences for women and for LGBTI-persons, and changes in government policy are likely to have long-lasting consequences.

When looking at the consequences for the organized women's and LGBTI movement, they have been affected in different ways. CSOs working on LGBTI rights have experienced banning of activities as well as direct threats and violence, and for these organizations it has become increasingly difficult to operate in the open. Women's rights organizations on the other hand have generally been spared from the harshest forms of repression (with organizations in the Kurdish Southeast as exceptions), and even though there is a fear that they will be more exposed in the near future, they still have a space to act. Women's organizations are some of the most affected by the emergence of a growing number of powerful GONGOs, that swallow up recourses as well as representation in international fora, become a control mechanism and promote a gender ideology that is in opposition to international agreements on gender equality.

Three actors that do not fall into the traditional conception of civil society have been extremely hard hit by the shrinking democratic space in Turkey. Media organizations and journalists have been subjected to severe pressure in various forms, the rule of law is under threat and the legal profession squeezed by purges, and academics have faced serious strains from purges and forced self-censorship. The crackdown on these three groups has far-reaching and long-term consequences for civil society as well as for Turkish society at large.

Although the current state of affairs in Turkey has created an extremely stressful situation for civil society workers and volunteers, organizations and individuals constantly find new ways of acting, using the space that is still there and creating new spaces in new arenas. CSOs make changes to the kind of projects they work on, modify objectives, and lower expectations on output and outcomes. Many are also preoccupied with their personal safety and the survival of their organization, and have had to adapt their activities to what kinds of topics are considered unproblematic. Even if this has always been the case for some CSOs in Turkey, the arbitrariness

and unpredictability of repression today means that adaptation becomes much more difficult. There is an increased risk of being "tainted" as a result of collaborations with others if your collaboration partners are suddenly targeted by the government. This affects choices of partnerships between Turkish organizations but also relations to international organizations and foreign bilateral donors. Paradoxically, for some CSOs working in the rights field including e.g. press freedom, the shrinking space means more work. As repression has hit different areas and groups in different ways, those organizations that still have a space to act (such as women's rights CSOs), actively use this space and have been crucial for the civil society resistance at large.

In light of this democratic backslide, the Sida 2017 midterm review of the reform cooperation with Turkey makes several adjustments in the implementation of the strategy. The long-term focus still lies on EU accession, but in the present situation it is formulated as a preparation for a reviewed process. New partnerships will be sought with civil society actors in the areas of gender equality, LGBTI rights, human rights and democracy including freedom of expression, whereas cooperation with the government will have lower priority. Sida also recognizes a need for more flexibility in the portfolio, with short-term survival in focus.

Our study shows that Swedish aid is extremely important, and that its significance increases as the democratic space in Turkey shrinks. The opportunities for domestic funding have more or less disappeared for independent CSOs outside the government's own sphere, and not many international donors give the kind of long-term core support that Sweden provides. Sweden also has a good reputation as a donor; known as being flexible, open to dialogue about changes in aims and practicalities, more interested in results than details, and knowledgeable about the current situation in Turkey.

The report describes how Swedish reform cooperation is organized in Turkey in a manner that constitutes a unique model in Swedish foreign aid. The Swedish aid model in Turkey combines substantial, longer-term core support via the Embassy in Ankara with smaller, short-term project support intended to start up and

expand activities via the Consulate General in Istanbul. The support via Ankara is administered by Sida with rigorous procedures, whereas the support via Istanbul follows the procedures of the Foreign Ministry and puts less administrative burden on its receivers. The smaller grants in Istanbul *de facto* function as "seed money" that enables small CSOs to gain experience and grow, and for the more viable of those organizations to "graduate" to core funding in Ankara.

This "seed-core model", while higher in overhead costs and more burdensome in terms of administration, appears particularly adequate for the current situation in Turkey. The combination of these two forms of support allows for maximum flexibility as it on one hand makes possible adjustments to a rapidly changing context and support to small organizations, and on the other hand creates possibilities for larger organizations receiving core support to adjust aims, objectives and activities in dialogue with the donor without being afraid of losing the support.

The one area where the high degree of flexibility appears counter-productive is in the grant application procedure. In a situation of significant stress for CSOs, the lack of clear instructions and expectations adds unnecessary burden to already extreme working conditions. This could be easily remedied with a more structured application process and better information, perhaps coupled with opening up for applications in Turkish (as the EU Delegation to Turkey has done).

Foreign aid is a potential but necessary risk in Turkey today. Any partner of a foreign aid agency can be accused of being a foreign agent but this risk is higher when receiving support from a foreign government that is viewed unfavorably by the Turkish government. At the moment, Turkish-Swedish bilateral relations do not constitute a serious problem in this respect, but this could change in an instant. Nevertheless, the benefits far outweigh the potential risks.

Our most important conclusion is that Swedish reform cooperation is doing much to support pro-democracy actors in Turkey today. Despite the rapidly shrinking democratic space, there are still many organizations actively working on human rights,

women's and LGBTI-persons rights, minority rights, and independent news reporting and research. Without support from Sweden, much of this work would be significantly weakened. Even though the objectives of the current strategy will not be met, it is possible to be flexible under its umbrella.

In line with the midterm review, we recommend continued support to organizations working for human rights and democracy, including freedom of expression, and for women's and LGBTI-persons rights. In addition, we recommend support to academics as they are crucial for the long-term survival of civil society and democracy. We recommend attempting to broaden partnerships in order to counteract polarization. At the same time, it is important to avoid supporting GONGOs, which are one of the tools that the government uses to shrink the space for independent CSOs. The midterm review recommended a shift in focus from working with the government as a partner, towards working with CSOs. In general, our study supports this shift, but a full switch would make both civil society actors and the Swedish aid to Turkey itself too vulnerable. To keep some support for e.g. capacity building on human rights and gender equality for civil servants may serve to prepare Turkey for a possible return to the reform path in the future and serve to make support to CSOs less vulnerable to government restrictions on the aid itself.

In sum, we recommend the following:

- Continue, and strengthen, Sweden's reform cooperation with Turkish partners in a short-term as well as a long-term perspective. The shrinking democratic space in Turkey makes this support even more relevant.
- In the new strategy (from 2020), keep and strengthen the overall goals including preparations for a renewed EU accession process, democracy, human rights, gender equality, freedom of expression and rule of law.
- Build in far-reaching flexibility in the implementation of the strategy as the situation in Turkey is likely to continue to change.

- Consider writing a new strategy specifically for Turkey, as the rationale for this strategy is different from the Western Balkans.

- Continue to support local, small and medium size, organizations working for human rights and democracy, with a particular focus on freedom of expression and women's and LGBTI rights.

- In addition, find ways to support academics. They are crucial for the survival of the civil society and democracy at large, in the short-term as well as a long-term perspective.

- Support organizations and projects actively counteracting the growing polarization in Turkey and explore ways to broaden partnerships.

- Continue to strengthen the support to civil society, but do not completely halt support that includes the government as a beneficiary. Consider moving this support to lower levels, e.g. municipalities, if needed.

- Continue to develop the "seed-core model" with a combination of smaller seed/project funding and larger core funding.

- Consider using the "seed-core model" in other contexts where the democratic space is shrinking.

- Develop a method or format for clearer instructions in dialogue with partners, and consider opening up for grant applications in Turkish.

- Make sure that both the Embassy, the Consulate and MFA/Sida in Stockholm have sufficient expertise and enough competence on relevant aspects of the Turkish context, to be able handle the present situation.

Introduction

During the last few years, the notion of a "shrinking" space for civil society has become commonplace in political development discussions that take place in the context of a global trend of democratic retrenchments. The concept has been used to describe sometimes-dramatic crack downs on civil society, linked to a broader repression of free speech and opposition movements, and generally increasing authoritarianism. From a Swedish development cooperation perspective, with its long tradition of defining democracy, rule of law, human rights and gender equality both as development goals in their own capacity and a prerequisite for the eradication of poverty, this era of shrinking democratic space constitutes a major challenge.

The Swedish government points to the shrinking democratic space as a trend that has to be taken seriously in development cooperation as well as in other parts of foreign policy, and also one that has to be dealt with actively. One of the 2017 focus areas for the Swedish feminist foreign policy is "promoting women and girls' participation as a strategy against the shrinking democratic space" (Utrikesdepartementet 2017). In November 2016, the Swedish government assigned the Swedish International Development Cooperation agency (Sida) to investigate how Sweden's development cooperation may contribute to the countervailing of the shrinking space for the civil society. In its response, Sida points out four factors that would make Swedish aid more effective: 1) strengthened context specific analysis; 2) support to a range of actors including both rights holders and duty bearers; 3) synergies between contributions within different strategies (bilateral, regional, global); 4) strengthened collaboration between development cooperation and other parts of Swedish foreign policy (Sida 2017).[1]

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[1] This is in line with the recommendations put forward by Richard Youngs in an EBA-report from 2015. Youngs argue that donors need to adopt a more systematic approach to the closing space for civil society. He hereby points at coherence between civil society support and other parts of the foreign policy, flexible funding mechanisms and transparency as key factors (Youngs 2015).

Turkey is one of the partner countries where the shrinking space has had a direct effect on development cooperation. The point of departure for Sweden's development, or reform, cooperation with Turkey is the EU-accession process, and when the strategy was developed in 2014 this process was by and large still on track. Since then, the situation has changed dramatically; the accession process is de facto frozen with no new negotiating chapters being opened, and in international discussions about the global trend of shrinking space Turkey is often held up as an illustration of a national context where the situation is particularly severe and difficult. In the in-depth strategy report for Turkey in the spring of 2017, Sida's conclusion is that the current shrinking space in Turkey calls for an adjustment of Sweden's reform cooperation. This decision to adjust the continued development/reform cooperation with one of Sweden's partner countries in response to the shrinking space is the point of departure for this study.

Part 1: The study: Foreign aid in the era of shrinking space

1.   Overall aim

This study offers an up-to-date account of the shrinking democratic space in Turkey and its effects on civil society organizations in Turkey, coupled with an evaluation of how well Swedish reform/development cooperation is adapted to this kind of situation.[2] The reports seeks to provide answers to two related research questions:

1. What does the shrinking democratic space in Turkey entail for civil society organizations working on topics of importance for democracy, human rights and gender equality?
2. Has Swedish development/reform cooperation with Turkey adapted adequately to this challenging context?

For each of these questions, we investigate a set of subordinate evaluation questions.

1. With respect to the shrinking democratic space in Turkey:
   a. Mapping the shrinking space: How is the shrinking democratic space defined and experienced by civil society organizations whose work support democracy, human rights and gender equality in Turkey? Are organizations in some areas facing more repression than others and if so, where is the space shrinking more or faster?

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[2] This study focuses on Sweden's bilateral support to Turkey guided by the *Results strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey* (Utrikesdepartementet 2014) and distributed via the Consulate General in Istanbul and the Embassy in Ankara). It does not cover support distributed via the Swedish Institute, or through international or Swedish civil society organizations under the umbrella of the *Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law* or the *Strategy for support via Swedish civil society organizations.*

b. Coping strategies and countermeasures: What have been the reactions and counter strategies to the shrinking space by these civil society organizations? What specific countermeasures are decided on by civil society organizations and on what grounds? How are these measures realized?

To answer these first set of questions, we rely on existing studies on democracy and civil society in Turkey, news reports, and interviews with almost 40 representatives of a broad range of rights-based civil society organizations (CSOs) and international governmental organizations (IGOs) in Turkey.

2. With respect to the question of the fitness of Swedish aid:
   a. The role of Swedish aid in the Turkish context of shrinking space: What are the main challenges for Swedish aid in the current situation in Turkey? In what ways and to what extent has Swedish aid adjusted to it? Are there any drawbacks associated with the aid itself?
   b. Conclusions and recommendations: Based on our answers to the above questions, is the Swedish support to Turkey fit for purpose? Can Swedish aid do any good in the current context? If so, what, if any, changes could be made to improve it?

To answer these second set of questions, we have consulted relevant reports, internal reviews, and strategy documents by relevant government agencies, and have interviewed 16 key representatives of Swedish policy-making and donor agencies.

By answering these questions, this study also aims at contributing to an understanding of the changing democratic mechanisms in the current era of shrinking space, which may be relevant also in other national contexts. Furthermore, the study adds a gender perspective to the analysis of the shrinking space. Gender equality has since long been a priority in Swedish development cooperation, further strengthened by the government's Feminist foreign policy implemented during the last four years. However, a gender perspective is left out in much of the recently growing literature on

the meaning and consequences of the shrinking democratic space, and our study aims to fill the gap in this respect. Therefore, we will put particular emphasis on asking how the ongoing political changes in Turkey impact the rights of women and on how women's rights organizations fare and cope in the current climate. As norms for gender, expressed for example in a dominant gender ideology, also impacts how sexuality is perceived and restricted, the rights of LGBTI-persons and the space for LGBTI organizations are also in focus.

Question 1 on the shrinking democratic space in today's Turkey is discussed in Part 2, and question 2 on the fitnees of Swedish aid in Part 3. In Part 4 we draw conclusions and give recommendations. Before moving on to these questions, we present the notion of a shrinking space and introduce our material and methodology.

2.   The notion of a shrinking space

This study takes the recently developing policy discussions and literature on the "shrinking space" for civil society as its starting point. The content given to the notion of a shrinking/closing space varies. It was first used to explain setbacks in international development support for democracy and human rights.[3] In this context, the concept of a shrinking space designates a government's use of legal and logistical barriers to prevent international organizations and aid actors to participate in and support democracy and human rights programs in their countries. Thus, it is connected to a general setback for democracy as the most successful model for nation states (economically as well as socially). This indeed has implications for international and local politics in general and development politics in particular (Carothers 2015, 2016b; Wolff/Poppe 2016). There is by now a body of research, some of it

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[3] For an overview of the development of the discussions about and concept of a shrinking/closing space, se Carothers/Brechenmacher (2014), Mendelson (2015), Youngs (2015). Similar concepts have also been used in earlier discussions describing the limiting the space to act for development actors in other areas of international supports, such as trade (see e.g. Hunter Wade 2003).

scholarly and some from development institutes or civil society networks, that both defines the shrinking space as a global phenomenon and discusses how it has evolved in different national contexts (see e.g. Christensen/Weinstein 2013, Dupy et al 2014, Carothers 2015, Mendelson 2015, Wolff/Poppe 2015).

Today, the spatial metaphor of a shrinking or closing democratic space for civil society is used to represent a global trend of rapidly – and in many contexts dramatically – changed preconditions for civil society, i.e. how freedoms of expression, speech, assembly and association are being circumscribed (see e.g. Unmüssig 2016; CIVICUS 2016; Domradzka et.al. 2016; Firmin 2017). Many states impose increasing restrictions on civil society organizations' ability to operate through legal and extra-legal measures, including violence, with support from other associated and supportive actors, also within civil society (Ibid). In addition to civil society organizations (CSOs), also independent media, universities, and legal institutions are other actors facing serious setbacks and restrictions in many contexts. This has both direct (e.g. lost media platform, arrests and disenabling laws, lost academic jobs) as well as indirect (e.g. lack of freedom of expression, impunity and legal unpredictability, lost knowledge base) consequences for civil society, and undermines the foundations of democracy (c.f. Firmin 2017; CIVICUS 2016).

These trends are not necessarily new in substance. Democracy, human rights and gender equality have never been self-evident everywhere, neither as ideals nor in practice. When and where progress has been achieved there have also been backlashes. What is new, and what makes it relevant to talk about the shrinking space as a global trend, is the magnitude and similarity of what is happening in many diverse and geographically distant settings (Carothers/Brechenmacher 2014, AWID et al 2016, CIVICUS 2016). Whether due to globalization writ large, to similar and simultaneous developments in information and communications technology, or to active learning and "copycat" behavior by authoritarian leaders, it is becoming increasingly obvious that efforts to close the democratic space for civil society in countries around the world should be seen as interconnected and mutually reinforcing phenomena, not as isolated events or actions (Ibid.). This inter-

connectedness applies to those state actors who are engaged in shrinking the space for democratic action, but also for civil society actors that engage in protests and other counter strategies.

In a longer historical perspective, the recent democratic backsliding that we are witnessing in the world is a reversal of a secular trend towards increasing political liberalization that accelerated dramatically with the end of the Cold War. Different measures capture different aspects of these trends. One widely used dataset (Polity) differentiates between democracies, autocracies, and anocracies, the latter being defined as a "middling category rather than a distinct form of governance … whose governments are neither fully democratic nor fully autocratic" (Marshall & Elzinga-Marshall 2017, p 30). The Polity data, which only goes up until 2015, emphasizes the long-term trend towards a greater place for democratic regimes in world politics in the long haul.

Diagram 1. Long-term global trends in governance[4]
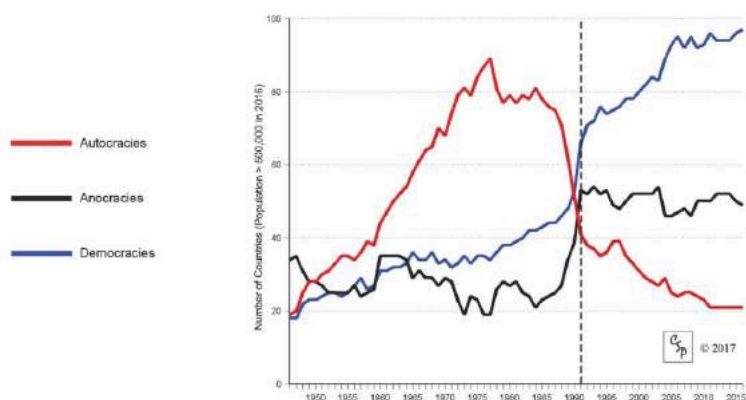
Figure 13. Global Trends in Governance, 1946-2016. "Autocracies" include all regimes with POLITY scores from -10 to -6; "Anocracies" are those with POLITY scores between -5 and +5 (including -88 "transitional," -77 "interregnum," and -66 "occupied" polities); "Democracies" include all regimes with POLITY scores between +6 and +10. Data is from the CSP *Polity* dataset.

However, the more recent backsliding to which the discussions of a globally shrinking democratic space refer, is evident in many other datasets. So, for example, the latest edition of Freedom House's annual index of freedom around the world shows a clear and evident

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[4] Diagram is taken from (Marshall & Elzinga-Marshall, 2017).

negative trend over the most recent decade (Freedom House 2018). The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset shows a similar dramatic turn from democratic expansion toward a much larger number of backsliding countries (V-Dem 2018, p. 18). V-Dem uses the term "autocratization" to describe this trend.

Diagram 2. Global trends in liberal democracy[5]

FIGURE 1.3: NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WITH SIGNIFICANT CHANGES ON LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (RIGHT PANEL POPULATION-WEIGHTED).

--- Advancers   — Backsliders
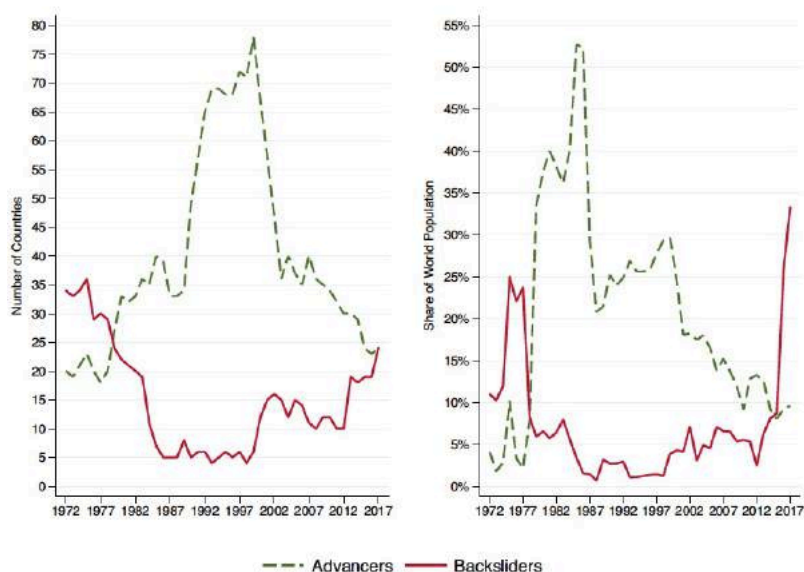
Although in recent years the shrinking space for women's rights and the space to act for the women's movement gradually have been more visible in discussions about the meaning and impact of a shrinking space (see e.g. Carothers 2016a), it is far from the center of most academic or policy-oriented research. In most cases a gender perspective is either absent (see e.g. Domradzka et.al. 2016; Firmin 2017) or briefly mentioned as one of the areas within the civil society that is affected by the shrinking space (see e.g. Carothers 2105; Mendelson 2015). However, studies initiated and/or carried out by women's rights actors show that in many parts of the world, a gender perspective is core rather than marginal in order to

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[5] Diagram taken from (V-Dem, 2018).

understand the shrinking space both as a global trend and a local phenomena. Women's organizations and women human rights defenders have been particularly targeted and the repression that women face globally is gendered and violent (see e.g. AWID 2014, 2016, Kvinna till kvinna 2014, Iman 2016). Also LGBTI organizations and activists have been severely hit (see e.g. AWID 2014, 2016). Existing discrimination makes women and LGBTI persons exposed to different forms of state repression. In many national contexts all over the world, including in the West/North, women's rights and the construction of femininity, masculinity and sexuality are at the core of growing conservatism whether it is grounded in nationalist, religious, radical right, populist or other ideologies.

At the same time, women's and LGBTI rights activists and groups, with their deep and long experience of oppression, discrimination, and being pushed to the margins of society, are well equipped with tools to creatively counteract the shrinking space (see e.g. AWID 2014 and 2016, Kvinna till kvinna 2014, Mama Cash & Urgent Action Fund 2017). In line with the Swedish Foreign Ministry's recommendation to consider the potential role of women and girls in pushing back against the shrinking space cited in the introduction, we therefore pay particular attention to the situation of women's activism and organizations, and also to LGBTI dito in this report.

The "shrinking space" metaphor is often used in a double sense. Sometimes it refers to a general *democratic* decline with increasing restrictions on free speech and infringements on civic rights, and at other times it is used in a more limited fashion to denote how *civil society* groups in many countries are finding it increasingly difficult to operate due to government restrictions. The imprecision in the usage of this notion is perhaps unfortunate, as the two phenomena (democracy and civil society) are not conceptually identical, but it stems from the empirical reality that they are also naturally intertwined. Conceptually, democracy is the broader notion, of which freedom for civil society actors is but one integral component. Empirically, the existence of a space for civil society where non-governmental associations and interest groups can articulate needs or demands and give voice to various societal

groups, broadly unfettered by government restrictions, is a necessary ingredient in a well-functioning democracy. And clearly, the current global trend of a shrinking space for civil society is part of a global democratic backlash.

As Swedish aid is the scope of our study, we use Sida's definition of *civil society* as "an arena, distinct from the state, the market and the household, where people, groups and organizations act together for common interests" (Sida 2017, p 33). This includes formal civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as associations (dernek), foundations (vakıf), networks, campaigns, religious communities, and other actors. The media is not always included in definitions of the civil society, but for the purpose of our study we sometimes include media in our discussions. Again, in line with Sida, we define a *democratic space* as "those conditions that are necessary for people to, without impediments, organize, communicate with each other and take part in and influence the society" (Ibid). A democratic space is a prerequisite for a lively and pluralistic civil society, as is freedom of association, assembly, and speech (Ibid).

While the focus of this report is on the changing preconditions for civil society in Turkey and on how Swedish aid operates in this context, we will inevitably also address the broader question of democratic decline. To mark the interdependence between a general democratic decline and a shrinking space for civil society, we will use the term *shrinking democratic space*.

3.   Material and method

This study aims to map the perceptions of the shrinking democratic space in Turkey among civil society actors in Turkey, to understand how they are coping in this context, how Sweden as a donor has adapted to it, and to determine whether the current Swedish implementation of the strategy is sufficient to accommodate for the changing circumstances. In doing so, this study relies on a combination of qualitative methods.

First: in order to investigate the effects of the shrinking democratic space in Turkey on civil society actors, we have

consulted news material and existing literature and have conducted interviews with almost 40 representatives from a broad range of civil society and international governmental organizations. The civil society organizations in question mainly represent so-called rights-based – as opposed to service-based or charitable – organizations (see Part 2 below for more on this distinction) and actors in fields typically seen as central to a viable democratic space, since the focus of our study is on how precisely this democratic space in Turkey is under pressure.

It is important to note that our sample is not a random sample that represents all Turkish civil society organizations but a specific subset of all Turkish CSOs. However, this group of civil society actors are among those who provide human rights advocacy and support for the rights of minorities, women, or workers, and who perform key democratic functions such as exercising and defending free speech and the independent exchange of ideas. In the current political climate in Turkey, many of them have been among the groups who have been most harshly affected by the shrinking of the democratic space and therefore their perceptions of this phenomenon are particularly interesting. We have also conducted interviews with representatives for several major international governmental organizations (IGOs) active in Turkey to further complement our understanding of the shrinking space for civil society in the country.

Second: in order to evaluate the adaptation of Swedish reform cooperation with Turkey, we examined government policy documents, reports, and internal reviews, and supplemented this document analysis by interviewing a second category of actors who represent the donor. Sweden is arguably the most significant bilateral (foreign state) donor active in Turkey today; indeed it is perhaps the only bilateral state donor present in any significant capacity (Sida 2017b).[6] We have conducted interviews with 16

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[6] There are a few other bilateral donors present in Turkey. However, several consulates and embassies (notably the British, Dutch, and Norwegian ones) also support Turkish civil society actors with smaller grants. In addition, there are several foundations with the base in primarily Germany and the United States, who provide important support for e.g. think tanks and civil society projects, but

representatives from Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Stockholm, Ankara, and Istanbul. We treat this as one group – the donor – but in our analysis we are also mindful of the fact that Sida and the Ministry have different roles and may have partly different perspectives. For example, while Sida as the Swedish development cooperation agency by necessity has a long-term perspective, the MFA must relate more closely to the constantly changing world of foreign politics.

We conducted one semi-structured interview with each interlocutor. In many cases, we conducted interviews with several representatives of the same organization, usually together but at times separately.

Due to the repressive political climate in Turkey today, many civil society actors are fearful of being falsely accused of supporting terrorism, insulting the President or the Turkish nation, or conducting any of a number of illegal activities simply for doing work that in a normal context would be considered legal and appropriate. While government representatives and its supporters assert that only those with something to hide need to be afraid, this is patently untrue in the current context of purges based on anonymous tips and weak to non-existent rule of law (we elaborate on this in Part 2 below). In the process of conducting and analyzing our interviews we therefore took extreme caution to protect our interview subjects (or interlocutors, as we shall call them). We refrained from collecting any personal information about our interlocutors and have carefully protected their anonymity throughout the research process. In this report, we have removed any information that might be used to identify them.

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they are not strictly speaking bilateral aid actors. In terms of funding size, the EU is the main development actor in Turkey with its IPA funding (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) of €4,5 billion for the period 2014-20, and an additional €3+3 billion scheduled for the Refugee Facility. For more on EU's IPA, see: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/ funding-by-country/turkey_en Several other actors, including bilateral, INGO, and multilateral donors are active near the Syrian border in support of refugees from Syria.

On matters of research ethics, we have closely consulted with a reference group appointed by the Swedish Expert Group for Foreign Aid Studies (which funded the study) and with staff at the Research Support Office at Stockholm University, who were also in dialogue with representatives for the Ethical Vetting Board in Stockholm. We have also consulted with representatives from Sida, the MFA, and colleagues at the Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies who are experts on Turkish politics and civil society on how to manage risks in conjunction with the research and publication of this report.

We collected the material during a period of seven months (October 2017 to May 2018), which included two field trips to Turkey (with visits to Turkey in both November 2017 and March 2018). The preliminary analysis from an early set of interviews and text analysis was used to define topics and foci for the following research. After gathering the material, we then analysed it by identifying themes and common topics in a process similar to that described by Graneheim & Lundman (2004) and Burnard (1991). The "open coding" process of analysis included the initial creation of a long list of keywords that emerged out of our readings of all statements in the material ("inductive category development" (Mayring 2000)). In this, our preliminary research questions guided our analysis.

This initial list was gradually condensed (Graneheim & Lundman 2004) by clustering keywords together into themes, by identifying categories and sub-categories, and by eliminating redundant keywords. We then grouped the relevant statements according to themes in a set of new documents categorized according to the research questions (1-3) and the different actors.[7] These themes are presented under separate headings in Part 2 and 3 below.

As in most qualitative analysis and grounded theory in particular, this was an iterative process in which keywords, categories, and themes emerged, merged, disappeared, and/or evolved as we read and reread the data, continuously "testing" our categorizations and

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[7] Our qualitative approach to the analysis of the content of the interviews also allowed us to be mindful of context and narrative meaning, even as we abstracted statements into thematic clusters.

our sometimes divergent interpretations against the data. In this process, we aimed for high *validity*: accurately capturing the most important phenomena, and *parsimony*: simplifying the more than hundred pages of notes/data that we produced/collected. We have had to put the safety of our interlocutors ahead of concerns for *reliability* as traditional ways of enhancing the latter such as making the interview transcripts available for interpretation by others are not available to us. In the interest of taking the anonymity of our interlocutors seriously, we do not use any direct quotes from the interviews.

Part 2: The shrinking space and civil society in Turkey

4.   The expanding and contracting democratic space in Turkey

The backdrop for this study is the dramatic shrinking of democratic space in Turkey that we have seen during the last few years. This chapter provides some background to the present situation. We begin with a short historical overview of democratic developments and civil society in Turkey before the advent of the ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party/*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*). Then we turn to the first period of AKP, and finally we move on to describe the rapid changes and dramatic backsliding on democratic reforms in the period after the Gezi protests in 2013 and the attempted Coup d'Etat in 2016.

4.1   Democracy and civil society in Turkey – a short history

The first free and fair multiparty elections in Turkey were held in 1950, 27 years after the creation of the Turkish Republic out of the ashes of the crumbling Ottoman Empire (Zürcher 1997). Until 1950, the country's founding father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, had presided over a one-party state-building project in which he, in his own immortal words, "dictated democracy" to his people.

The 1950 elections brought the center-right Democratic Party (DP) to power under the leadership of Adnan Menderes. A skillful politician with a populist bent who was well liked with the rural Anatolian population, Menderes presided over a period of rapid initial economic growth thanks in part to a series of good harvests. But this period was followed by increasing economic difficulties, growing socio-political tension, attempts to consolidate political power in the ruling party, and increasing repressive measures by the

DP government aimed at the judiciary, media, and the universities. In 1960, a radical segment within the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) initiated a coup-d'état that unseated Menderes and introduced a brief period of military rule. Menderes was executed and a large number of officers, civil servants in the judiciary, and academics were purged along with government officials.

A few months after the coup, the radicals among the putschists were sidelined and a constitution that included measures to ensure balance between political institutions, a bill of rights, and limits to the political power was drafted under the guidance of legal scholars and parliamentarians. Despite resistance from hardliners, the new constitution was adopted after receiving strong support in a referendum in 1961. Later that year, democratic elections were held again. The Democratic Party had been disbanded but its successor party, the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi) did well and even entered into a short-lived coalition with the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi or CHP). In the 1965 elections, the Justice Party became the largest party in Turkey, only three years after the coup that had unseated its predecessor party.

Despite the swift return to multiparty democracy, the military would remain vigilant behind the scenes, setting the ultimate boundaries for what was deemed acceptable in Turkish politics for the decades that followed. The military saw itself as the guarantor of the secular and indivisible nature of the Turkish state and stepped in when it perceived these attributes to be threatened. The pattern observed after the first democratic elections in 1950 – of competitive elections followed by periods of political, economic, and societal turmoil that eventually would draw the military back in – was to be repeated almost every ten years in Turkish political history. A second intervention took place in 1971 and a third in 1980. In 1997, a non-violent or "postmodern" coup enacted through a military memorandum ended a controversial two-party coalition government between Islamist and center-right parties.

Behind the scenes, a so-called "deep state" (*derin devlet*) emerged; a murky coalition or network that included the military, intelligence, paramilitary right-wing groups, and elements of the judiciary, police and gendarmerie, and state bureaucracy. It conspired to contain or

eliminate what they conceived as the main threats to the Republic: Kurdish separatists and revolutionary leftist groups, but also political Islamists that threatened Atatürk's secular heritage. The Cold War, escalating societal violence between leftist and right-wing groups during the 1970s, and a violent conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the state that erupted during the 1980s contributed to the prominence of these deep state actors and hamstrung the development of Turkish democracy. Since the drafting of the 1982 post-coup constitution, any political party that was deemed to violate article 68, paragraph 4, of the constitution was subject to closure (Algan 2011). In particular, Kurdish nationalist political parties (especially those affiliated with the PKK) have been closed down on the basis of violating the "indivisible integrity" of the territory and nation, whereas Islamist parties have typically been accused of violating the "principles of the democratic and secular republic".

However, it is important to note that within these limits to acceptable political activity set by the constitution and despite the eternal presence in the background of the political sphere of the military and the deep state, Turkish democracy and civil society did develop significantly during the second half of the 20th century. Civilian rule was reinstated soon after each coup. Until very recently, multiparty elections since 1950 have been generally free and fair, and a multitude of parties representing a range of interests and ideologies have competed in them. While Turkish law prohibits secessionist (read ethnic Kurdish) and religious (read political Islamist) parties, many Kurds held elected office as representatives of establishment parties to the left and right, and many populist politicians to the center-right courted the religious conservative votes and even flirted with political Islam. The Turkish media landscape was until recently diverse and pluralistic, and the Turkish higher education system has produced freethinking and internationally competitive scholars. While the bureaucracy and judiciary until recently were bastions of the secular Kemalist state, advancement was also broadly meritocratic.

The number of civil society associations had grown slowly in the early years of the republic, from around 200 associations in 1938 to over 2,000 in 1950, only to explode to 17,000 by the end of the

Democratic Party rule in 1960. By 1970, the estimated number of associations reached 42,000 (Bianchi 1984, p 155). The 1980s was a period when the modes of participation in the political domain and public sphere were redefined (Sirman 1989). According to Sirman, the era was characterized by a "search for new conceptions of democracy and individuality" in all sections of the political spectrum, an opening up for new forms of political participation, and a widened scope for civil society (Ibid, p 15). This included a questioning of the private-public dichotomy and was consequently the time of the birth and visibility of the modern women's movement in Turkey (Ibid; Arat 2004). Two demonstrations in Istanbul and Ankara in 1987 protesting violence against women are often mentioned as the starting point of an independent and "small but effective" women's movement (Sümer & Eslen Ziya 2017). The 1980s also shows the first signs of an LGBTI-movement in Turkey, starting with in-house political meetings and in the 1990s and 2000s gradually becoming publicly visible (Biricik 2014).

Civil society continued to grow in numbers and expand in focus, and by 1996 there were a reported 54,987 non-governmental associations in Turkey (Toprak 1996, p. 104). The civil society that emerged in these years was increasingly diverse, and today includes student organizations, labour unions, lawyers' associations, human rights, women's rights, LGBTI rights, Kurdish and other minorities' rights organizations, religious foundations, charity associations, sports associations, and a plethora of professional associations and employers' (business) organizations.

There are a number of ways in which to dissect this body of CSOs in Turkey but we shall note three distinct categorizations. First, there is a basic administrative distinction between associations (dernekler), which are membership-based, and endowment-based foundations (vakıflar). The tradition of foundations goes back to the Ottoman era and was in part a way to avoid Islamic inheritance laws that prevented capital accumulation in families over generations (Kuran 2005). Turkish associations and foundations are regulated in separate legal statutes and by different government agencies, but in practice there is a high degree of similarity between the two (CIVICUS 2012).

Second, in his 1984 overview of interest groups and associations in Turkey, Robert Bianchi distinguished between "two different and often overlapping networks" of organizations: "the pluralistic network of private voluntary associations and the corporatist network of semiofficial compulsory associations" (Bianchi 1984, p. 2). One existed entirely outside the state and its corporatist network; the other within its sphere. We shall return to Bianchi's categorization below.

Third, a recent survey, the 2011 CIVICUS "State of Civil Society" report, distinguished between CSOs active in the areas of "social services and solidarity", which make up the vast bulk of Turkish associations, and those engaged in "advocacy and policy oriented activities" (CIVICUS 2012, p. 272). According to their survey, only "around 1% of CSOs carry out activities that can be classified as addressing democracy, law and human rights." While this precise figure should perhaps be taken with a grain of salt and the distinction between these two categories is not always clear, it does highlight the fact that the kinds of CSOs in Turkey that typically receive Swedish support constitute a very small fraction of all civil society associations in the country (Ibid).

On the other hand, the report also pointed to a "notable recent increase of activity and visibility among advocacy oriented CSOs in areas such as women's rights, human rights, consumer protection and student and youth issues", as well in addressing two important political issues, "the status of the Kurdish minority and the secular/ Islamic divide". This means that while not large in numbers, there is a vibrant and healthy ecosystem of CSOs working for political causes that resist the state and defend the rights of workers, women, or various minorities (sexual, ethnic, religious, or political), some of which have survived decades under more or less repressive state policies. These CSOs and activists are particularly strong in the larger cities of Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara, and in cities in the Kurdish Southeast, and are typically associated with political movements on the left. Indeed, a defining feature of civil society in Turkey noted by most observers is the high degree of politicization (e.g. Bianchi 1984; Keyman & Icduygu 2003). To the left, there are the rights based organizations, and on the conservative side of the

political spectrum, the strongest civil society organizations are religious orders (tarikatlar) and charitable foundations (vakiflar).

To some extent, divisions in civil society reflect the tradition of a strong state in Turkey. Sociologist Şerif Mardin famously framed this as the division between a dominant center and a weak periphery (Mardin 1973), and the existence of the strong state has consequences for civil society, as Binnaz Toprak explains:

> *In this conception of the coercive state (ceberrut devlet) with centuries of a bureaucratic tradition behind it, the center is perennially suspicious of civil society, which it tries to coopt, control or suppress (Toprak 1996, p. 89).*

Toprak is somewhat critical of this representation, arguing that it misses the Ottoman historical tradition of legal-rational bureaucracy that functioned on the basis of hierarchy and meritocratic advancement. According to Toprak, the strong state narrative should be balanced by a recognition of long-standing forces trying to contain and limit state power in Turkey (Ibid, p.91).

This caveat notwithstanding, Turkish civil society has been a way for peripheral actors to organize in the face of state repression, and they have therefore often tended to exist in opposition to and conflict with the state. This includes actors on the right, as e.g. religious orders were soon closed down by the state after the creation of the Turkish Republic (and many had been persecuted also during Ottoman times). But repression was always harder against the left, as labor unions and rights-based CSOs struggled in the aftermath of coups and in the face of government repression. The very word for "organization" in Turkish – "örgüt" – arguably has bad connotations, as it suggests an entity that exists in opposition to the state. Today, the word is typically used in conjunction with "terör", to denote terrorist organizations.

One consequence of this is that few truly independent civil society organizations can attract large numbers of members. Few want to risk being seen as supporting an organization that is or may end up in conflict with a repressive state. The CIVICUS 2011 survey found that only 5% of Turks reported being an active member of a CSO, with volunteering levels being even lower and mostly shallow (CIVICUS 2012). Therefore, it has been difficult for most Turkish

associations to generate significant revenues through membership fees, which means that they are vulnerable and dependent on outside sources of funding in order to grow.

4.2 The first period of AKP rule

The decade-and-half of AKP (Justice and Development Party/*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) rule in Turkey has been characterized by initial improvements in the situation for many civil society organizations, as well as the now unmistakable downward trend in terms of human rights and respect for democratic principles that this report covers at length and to which we turn in the next section.

In the period of relative democratization between 2002-2007 that Ziya Öniş describes as AKP's "golden age" (Öniş, 2015, p. 23), the party was relatively open to political initiatives from below. In contrast to the other parties' top-down politics, organizing at the local level has been key for AKP. As Jenny White points out, through the involvement of the local grassroots the party was brought closer to the people, which "lent flexibility and endurance to the Islamist political project" (White 2013, p. 42). In this project, women's activism and organization was important. The women's organizations within the party were from early on among the most visible and dynamic units, and they were instrumental in the growth of the party from marginal actor to one that could credibly claim to represent a majority (Arat 1999). In Turkey, a country with a strong state-led secular tradition, women became politically involved at the grassroots level through an Islamist political party (Ibid). Through their involvement in the AKP, new opportunities for women opened up: for education, professional training, and political activism (White 2011). The party became a space where marginalized women could seek empowerment (Arat 1999). However, there were also limits for women's engagements. Women were expected to obey the religiously sanctioned morality and hierarchies of the party and they were not allowed into the rooms where the central decision-making took place (Ibid).

In this period of relative democratization, the space for civil society expanded, which also brought along a questioning of the history of the breach of human and minority rights in the country, such as Armenians, Kurds and Alevis, as well as with the *legacy* of the Coup d'État's.[8] Much of this opening up for civil society was associated with political reforms enacted as part of Turkey's EU accession process, which in turn gave space for the civil society to push for changes (Keyman & Icduygu 2003).

For the first time in Turkish political history, a broad range of civil society organizations – both rights based and service based associations – were invited to hearings and consultations in parliament on such matters as the 2004 reform of the Turkish Penal Code. The success of that reform was the result of a three-year campaign by a broad coalition of women's and LGBTI organizations in the Platform for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code (Ilkaracan 2007; WWHR 2005; Biricik 2014). Strategic campaigning and lobbying resulted in a radical change towards a legislation that largely recognized women's rights and autonomy over their body and sexuality, and the success of the campaign was even recognized by the activist's counterpart: the government (Ilkkracan 2007). As recently as in the 2012 efforts to draft a new constitution, civil society organizations were still invited to these kinds of consultations. The fact that The Platform to End Violence (*Şiddete Son Platformu*) in June 2012 threatened to withdraw from consultations to put pressure on the government not to limit women's rights to abortion is telling. And so is the result of the lobbying at the time: the anti-abortion policy was put on hold (Sümer & Eslen Ziya 2017).

In tandem with these changes in the political climate in the early years of AKP's rule, there was also a significant growth in the number of civil society associations during AKP rule, much like the trend (noted above) during the Democratic Party's decade in power back in the 1950s. In 2016, the Department of Associations and

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[8] Since 1960, Turkey has seen three Coup d'État in 1960, 1971 and 1980 respectively. A fourth "post-modern" Coup d'État took place in 1997, in which the army released a memorandum that has led to the end of the coalition government of the period which included an Islamist party, namely RP (Welfare Party – *Refah Partisi*).

General Directorate of Charities put the number of associations at 109,493, a dramatic 35% increase from 2004.

However, the numbers do not tell the whole story. Much of the increase likely came from civil society organizations that "institutionally take place outside the state" but still "have strong normative and ideological ties with state power", in Keyman and İçduygu's words (Keyman & İçduygu 2003). If rights-based CSOs belong to Bianchi's pluralist group, these typically service-oriented associations and foundations perhaps fit better into the corporatist category of "semiofficial compulsory associations". In fact, one of the features of the dynamics of civil society under AKP rule is that there appears to have occurred a shift in the relationship between the second (service- vs. rights- oriented associations) and third (pluralistic vs. corporatist-statist) axes of categorization. Many of the faith-based and service oriented foundations on the second axis have moved from the pluralistic category of the third axis to the corporatist-statist category (whereas the rights-based associations remain in the pluralist category).

Many of these foundations are organised in the Civil Solidarity Platform (Sivil Dayanışma Platformu, SDP), which is a network of civil society organizations with close ties to the AKP and the sitting government (Esen & Gumuscu 2017). [9] At the risk of oversimplifying the reality, both kinds of organizations (typically faith-based SDP foundations and rights-based CSOs) are politicized, but one category exists more or less in opposition to the state today whereas the other is closely affiliated with or co-opted by it. Later in the report, we shall say more about the latter category, for which we use the term Government Organized Non-Governmental Organizations or GONGOs. "GONGO" is a playful abbreviation of Government Organized Non-Governmental Organizations. That is, nominally independent CSOs that in reality typically receive indirect government funding (e.g. from oligarchs and corporations either close to the government or in need of government contracts) or donations encouraged by government-

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[9] Esen, Berk & Sebnem Gumuscu. (2017). "Building a Competitive Authoritarian Regime: State–Business Relations in the AKP's Turkey", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*.

affiliated elites, and may be tied to a ruling party through e.g. family ties to its management.

In fact, the growth and increasing wealth of GONGOs under the AKP is an important dimension of the shrinking space for truly independent CSOs. Although GONGOs are registered as CSOs they are neither independent, nor working to expand the civil sphere or democracy; on the contrary they are instruments of the government's views and ideology (Diner 2018). Bilge Yabancı especially point out two issues that have been "hijacked" by GONGOs, which she calls "dependent organizations": labor and women's rights (Yabancı 2016, p 136). The government has both created new organizations and co-opted existing ones "promoting an alternative approach to women's issues". These have gradually "sidelined feminist organizations critical of government's policies" (Ibid; c.p. Diner 2018). The rising influence of GONGOs on the shrinking democratic space for the civil society in Turkey became especially prominent after the Gezi protests; a period to which we now turn.

4.3 Democracy and civil society in Turkey after Gezi and the attempted Coup d'État

If the early years of AKP rule saw an opening up of democratic space and liberalization on many fronts, the last decade has been very different. The timeline is a matter of dispute among Turkey watchers, and a case could be made that the democratic retrenchment began as early as with the 2007 referendum decision to introduce a presidential system, continued shortly thereafter with a series of contentious trials through which the military (traditionally hostile to the political Islamist movement from which the AKP came) was subdued, and then with Erdoğan's purging of centrists on the party's list in the 2011 elections. But the more dramatic and highly visible turning point came two years after those elections, with the government's response to the 2013 Gezi protests.

The steady contraction of democratic space in Turkey leading up to 2013 could be described as one of the primary underlying reasons for the massive Gezi protests in the summer that year (Yalçın 2015). However, the immediate cause was the beginning of construction according to the government's declaration in October 2012 to destroy Gezi Park, located by the Taksim square in the heart of Istanbul cosmopolitan Beyoğlu district. The park was to be replaced with a shopping mall in the form of reconstructed Ottoman artillery barracks. The choice of these barracks as the model was symbolic since they had been the site of the last Islamist rebellion against a reformist Sultan. Moreover, in order to create space for the new construction, Istanbul municipality planned to tear down the iconic Atatürk Cultural Center, a modernist representation of Republican ideals. The square in front of the Cultural Center had been the site of May 1st demonstrations every year and of a massacre of demonstrators in 1977 that gave the square deep symbolic significance for the left movement in Turkey.

When bulldozers and diggers entered the park by the end of May 2013, environmentalists and other activists and concerned citizens gathered there to reclaim it (Yalçın 2015). Then Prime Minister Erdoğan responded harshly, but when the police burned tents and used tear gas and water cannons against protesters, the small demonstrations in the park quickly spread to the streets of Istanbul and to all of Turkey. Within a few days there were protests in 79 of Turkey's 81 provinces, and the police estimated that 3,5 million people participated (Ibid). Initially, it was a broad and peaceful mass protest. The fact that a children's birthday party in one of Istanbul's suburbs which one of the authors participated in, ended in children and parents joining the protests in Gezi park is indicative of the festive and popular nature of the initial protests. But the protesters were met with increasingly harsh police brutality and in the end 11 people were killed (one of them a police officer, the rest demonstrators) and 8000 were injured, some of them severely (Amnesty 2014).

The Gezi protests were inspiring to many in the Turkish civil society sphere and to many young Turks who had no previous experience of political mobilization. The movement also brought together diverse groups who had previously had had little in

common other than their concern over creeping authoritarianism, which was a significant change in the highly polarized and fractured Turkish civil society sphere. Environmentalist, feminist, LGBTI, Kurdish, socialist, and Muslim groups, but also football supporter clubs and people without any affiliation, joined forces to express their anxiety over authoritarian leadership, patriarchal rule and the destructive urban policies of the AKP and of Erdoğan. Apart from street protests, "neighbourhood forums" or "people's assemblies" took place all around Istanbul and in many other cities, practicing direct democracy in discussions about the government policies and strategies for political change (Eslen-Ziya & Erhart 2015, p.476).

The government did postpone the construction plans for Taksim (since then resumed), but more generally, the protests triggered a more confrontational and repressive approach by the authorities. In this, Erdoğan was personally leading the way, contradicting more conciliatory initial attempts to reach out to demonstrators by some of his colleagues. Instead, Erdoğan decried the demonstrators as vandals, terrorists, and pawns of international actors that he claimed wanted to overthrow the elected government. The protestors turned these accusations around and begun to call themselves *çapulçu* (looter) and created the verb "chapulling" as something positive.

Erdoğan's increasingly paranoid and polarising rhetoric was dramatically heightened later that same year, when a massive corruption investigation came to the public's attention in a spectacular fashion on December 17 and 25. The investigation targeted members of his cabinet as well as his family, and hours of secretly recorded conversations between all of Erdoğan's confidants were leaked, including a phone conversation between the Prime Minister himself and his son Bilal, where the PM can be heard instructing his son to empty the house of millions of Euros in cash before the police arrives.[10] By all accounts, the investigation was driven by prosecutors and police affiliated with the Islamic preacher Fetullah Gülen, who lives in exile in Pennsylvania. Gülen and his powerful network of followers ("Gülenists") had been an important

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[10] "Leaked tapes prompt calls for Turkish PM to resign" *The Guardian*, February 25, 2014. Downloaded on May 15, 2018 from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/leaked-tapes-calls-erdogan-resign-turkish-pm.

ally of the AKP but cracks in the alliance had appeared in 2010 and now turned into a fierce open struggle. Four ministers were forced to resign as a result of the scandal, but Erdoğan managed to hold on to power and sweep the rest of the investigations under the carpet (Orucuoğlu 2015). Instead, he turned on the Gülenists in the judiciary and police with a vengeance and began a large-scale campaign of purges and replacements of Gülenists in these institutions. On his (not unreasonable) [11] interpretation, the corruption scandal was nothing short of a civilian coup attempt, much as he had (incorrectly and absurdly) viewed the Gezi protests as an international conspiracy to overthrow his government.

Yalçın points out that the "trend of oppression and shrinking of political space in Turkey did not start with Gezi", but the events of 2013 did propel a significant change in the speed and severity of this trend (Yalçın 2015, p 82). The attempted Coup d'État in July of 2016, again allegedly orchestrated by Gülenists in the Turkish armed forces, would in turn further dramatically escalate this repression. Much is still unclear about the events of the night of the coup attempt but the attempt by units within the Armed Forces (primarily within the Army and Airforce) to overthrow the government resulted in some 250 deaths and thousands injured. As with the 2013 corruption scandal, the government, along with the majority of the population, blamed the coup on Gülenists and after the declaration of a State of Emergency (Olağanüstü Hal or OHAL) on July 20 the government began a series of extraordinary purges of alleged followers of Fetullah Gülen.

While the Gezi protests constituted a massive expression of popular resistance against the AKP that drew support from the same segment of society as do the rights-based civil society organizations, the attempted Coup d'État in July 2016 should rather be viewed as a violent expression of the power struggle between Erdoğan and his erstwhile ally: Fetullah Gülen and his followers, this time in the armed forces. However, the attempted coup would

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[11] It is difficult to verify anything concerning these contested matters, but both can be true: The allegations truly appear well-founded and the level of corruption in the AKP is well documented, but it is also true that the corruption scandal most likely was an attempt by Gülenists to get rid of Erdoğan.

have consequences for the rest of the opposition and for civil society organizations in general since it gave Erdoğan political cover to introduce the State of Emergency that has been renewed regularly every three months since then, under which he has the authority to issue decrees that carry the force of law and set aside certain civic rights. He also used the political capital that he earned after the attempted coup to introduce a unique presidential system,[12] which was approved in a constitutional referendum in April of 2017 that was roundly criticized for election irregularities by international observers. The presidential system itself has also been severely criticized by international organizations like the Council of Europe, for undermining parliamentary democracy and increasing the powers of the executive to the point that the political system risks devolving into one-man rule.[13]

The extent of Turkey's democratic backsliding is evident in an international comparison. For example, the Turkey has experienced a dramatic drop in Freedom House rankings on freedom in the world, such that it this year for the first time ever fell into the category of Not Free nations. Moreover, the decline in Turkey over the past decade is unique even on a global comparison.

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[12] The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe analyzed the proposed amendment to the constitution, concluding that it "represents a dangerous step backwards in the constitutional democratic tradition of Turkey." … stressing "the dangers of degeneration of the proposed system towards an authoritarian and personal regime." European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission). "Turkey. Opinion on the amendments of the constitution adopted by the grand national assembly on 21 January 2017 and to be submitted to a national referendum on 16 April 2017." CDL-AD(2017)005, Opinion No. 875/2017, Strasbourg, 13 March (2017).

[13] European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). "Turkey. Opinion on the amendments to the constitution adopted by the Grand National Assembly on the 21 of January 2017 and to be submitted to a national referendum on 16 April 2017", adopted by the Venice Commission at its 110th plenary session (Venice, 9-11 March 2017). CDL-AD(2017)005.

Diagram 3 Recent Turkish decline in freedom in comparison[14]
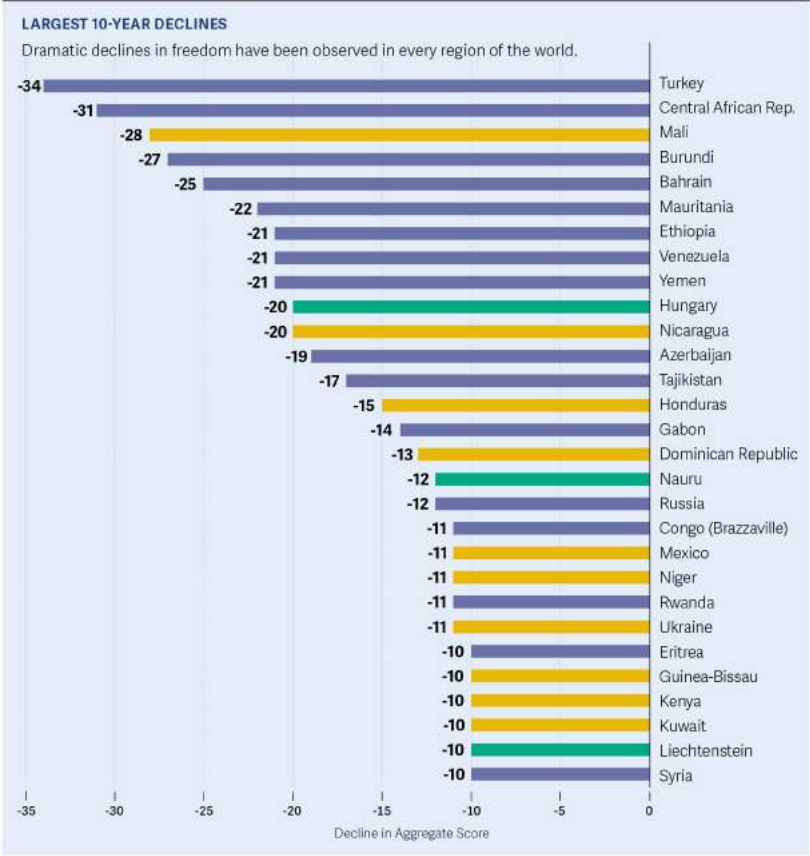
As the chart shows, Turkey leads the class when it comes to the degree of democratic decline in the past decade. While it started before the 2013 Gezi demonstrations, the years after Gezi and further large protests in the southeast (mainly Kurdish) region in 2014 that left over 40 people dead, saw a significant further deterioration of the legal environment for civil society activists and organizations (particularly Kurdish), an increase in political control over the judiciary, and criminalization of dissent and a record-number of prosecutions of citizens for "insulting the president" (Center for American Progress et al 2017). This includes an

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[14] Diagram taken from (Freedom House, 2018).

increased use of laws banning groups and activities threatening "national security", "public order" or "morality and Turkish family structure" (ibid). The government also employed informal mechanisms to restrict civil society organizations. For example, according to the CIVICUS *State of Civil Society 2015* report, "the Social Security Institution imposed an administrative fine on the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey after the foundation's efforts to provide medical help to wounded Gezi protestors in 2013." (CIVICUS 2016, p. 96).

As is well know by now, the general situation deteriorated even further – and dramatically so – after the attempted Coup d'État in July 2016. On July 23, in the first of a series of emergency decrees after the coup, the government ordered the closure of "1,043 private schools, 1,229 charities and foundations, 19 trade unions, 15 universities and 35 medical institutions" (Jones & Gurses 2016). With additional decrees, the government has suspended, fired, detained, arrested, and/or prosecuted a large number of civil servants and military personnel, academics, lawyers, and democratically elected members of parliament, as well as shut down journals, newspapers, and TV-channels all under the state of emergency laws. Websites and social media like Twitter and Facebook have periodically been blocked and Wikipedia remains inaccessible from Turkey today. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Turkey holds 73 journalists in jail at the time of writing, which is more than any other country in the world.[15]

The Human Rights Joint Platform in Turkey (IHOP) has conducted a thorough overview of the purges in numbers, the most recent version of which was published in April 2018.[16] According to IHOP's survey, 116,512 public officials were dismissed between July 27, 2016 and January 12, 2018. Some 3,833 dismissal decisions have so far been revoked by decree. In order for purged officials to be able to appeal their cases, Turkey has established a State of

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[15] Committee to Protect Journalists website, accessed on May 16, 2018 from: https://cpj.org/europe/turkey/
[16] Human Rights Joint Platform, "Updated Situation Report- State of Emergency in Turkey 21 July 2016 – 20 March 2018" Publishing Date: 17 April 2018, accessed on October 20 from: http://www.ihop.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SoE_17042018.pdf.

Emergency Appeals (or Investigation) Commission. However, the heavily backlogged Commission had received some 107 000 appeals by March 2018, and has so far only ruled in favour of few applicants. The existence of the appeals commission has had the effect of enabling the European Court of Human Rights to turn away tens of thousands of potential cases by referring the possibility of effective legal remedy in Turkey.[17]

The Turkish government's punitive measures initially targeted mainly people who are alleged to be responsible for the Coup or at least associated with the Gülen movement, and there was at least initially a degree of support for the purges among many Turks, who were traumatized by the violent coup attempt and had always viewed the power and influence that the movement wielded with suspicion. Rapidly, however, the emergency decrees were used to suppress almost all sorts of political opposition, as demonstrated by the case of the large number of academicians who lost their jobs for the fact that they signed a petition asking for peace between the military and the PKK, or were members of a leftist education syndicate (*Eğitim-Sen*). In this process, it is no longer only the well-known redlines and taboos that may elicit a harsh state response, which causes uncertainty for civil society organizations and activists (Center for American Progress et al 2017). The detention of 10 well-known human rights activists on the island Büyükada in July 2017, on the grounds that they were plotting a Coup to take down the government, is another recent case that demonstrates the precarious situation of civil society in Turkey today.[18]

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[17] According to a statement by an ECHR representative in November 2017, the court had then rejected "99 per cent of the 27,000 applications from Turkish citizens dismissed from their jobs following the failed coup attempt". http://www.themedialine.org/news/turkeys-post-coup-victims-find-no-relief-human-rights-court/.

[18] A group of human rights activists, including Amnesty International Turkey's director Idil Eser, were arrested for a meeting they organized in Büyükada/Istanbul, "on charges of 'helping an armed terrorist organization". URL: http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/amnesty-turkey-head-will-return-to-work-.aspx?PageID=238&NID=116499&NewsCatID=507.

One feature of the increasingly authoritarian politics of Turkey in the past two decades that has had serious consequences for civil society is the dynamic of dramatically shifting alliances of the ruling AKP and the current President, Erdoğan. Whether strategically or by making virtue or necessity, Erdoğan has skilfully engaged with a diverse set of allies over the years. During the early years of democratic reforms, the AKP allied tenuously with certain democratic moderates or liberals and even many progressives. A closer relationship with the ruling party was a chance to break the monopoly of power of the traditional "deep state" that had repressed them for so long, and to bring about democratic reforms that would bring Turkey closer to full membership in the European Union. Erdoğan also allied with a more moderate and capable Islamic faction early on: the Gülen movement, whose tight network of followers included many more educated acolytes than what Erdoğan could draw upon from the Islamist Milli Görüş tradition that the AKP had grown out of. Together, Erdoğan and the Gülen movement used questionable tactics at best to subjugate the military and deep state through a series of trials known as the "Ergenekon" and "Balyoz" trials 2008-2011.

However, when their mutual enemy was thus defeated, the two allies turned on each other, and the liberals and progressives were thrown by the wayside. During this period, Erdoğan had also increasingly come to rely on Kurdish voters to secure electoral victories, and eventually hoped to gain their support for what he hoped would be his signature achievement: a powerful presidential system. Peace negotiations were initiated with the PKK, an armed Kurdish party labeled as a terrorist organization by not just Turkey, but the U.S. and, in 2004, the EU as well. Some analyst claim that it was the Gülen movement's dissatisfaction with this rapprochement with the PKK (the two movements never saw eye to eye) that contributed to the final break between Gülen and Erdoğan (see e.g. Toktamis 2018). The consequences of the falling out between the latter two has been described above (a corruption scandal and attempted coup, with massive purges in retaliation).

Another consequence was that generals whom Gülenist attorneys had once put behind bars were let out and many were

eventually put back into positions of power in the military, as Erdoğan appears to have reached out to elements of the old "deep state" establishment in a brand-new alliance. Unsurprisingly, the peace process with the PKK soon broke down, perhaps when the leader of the pro-Kurdish HDP party, Selahattin Demirtaş, made clear in 2015 that he would not support Erdoğan's presidential ambitions, perhaps because the new alliance with the deep state nationalists would not allow it. [19] Today, this new alliance has been codified as the AKP has entered into a formal election alliance with its erstwhile opponent, the ultra-nationalist MHP.

Against the backdrop of hollowed-out judicial institutions and weakened rule of law in Turkey today, these shifting political alliances have turned out to have significant consequences for Turkish civil society as we shall see in this report. Which group happens to be in or out of favor at any given moment partially determines which civil society associations are targeted as enemies of the state.

There is no question that Turkish civil society today is on the defensive and in some cases even struggling to survive. Until recently, human rights, LGBTI and women's rights activists' as well as independent media's approach to the state was often to make *demands* that it takes responsibility for protecting rights. After Gezi, activists in Turkey – as in many other national contexts – have to deal with a situation where already achieved progress is under threat, an "erosion of gains", and where progress has to be *defended*. This is part and parcel of the shrinking space for civil society in Turkey. However, despite these huge challenges, civil society in Turkey is still in many respects vibrant and active. Even though it is indeed weakened, it offers one of the very few remaining voices that speak up about social and political problems in the country, including the government's infractions. It provides a reservoir of experience and knowledge about human rights and democratic norms and practices that will be invaluable if and when political conditions improve. We

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[19] Other factors played a role in the breakdown of the peace process with the PKK in the summer of 2015, including the Turkish security establishment's perception of the emergence of an autonomous PKK-affiliated region in Northern Syria as an existential threat (Ozkahraman, 2017).

now turn to the question of how the shrinking of democratic space is experienced from the "inside", i.e. by civil society actors in Turkey.

5.   Mapping the shrinking space

As noted above, we interviewed a broad swathe of civil society actors in Turkey. Most of them could be described as "rights-based" CSOs, but some were active on topics that did not focus on rights per se but performed other services that are essential to a well-functioning democracy. We also interviewed representatives from IGOs working on topic related to democracy, human rights, and gender equality. All gave affirmative answers when we asked them if Turkey today is characterized by a shrinking democratic space or a shrinking space for civil society organizations. The interviews then evolved around what this means: how different actors describe the shrinking space and its consequences, and how different actors are navigating in this landscape. In this chapter, we present our interpretation of the image of the shrinking space, as it emerges from our empirical material.

5.1   Arbitrariness

A theme that occurs again and again in descriptions about the situation in Turkey today is arbitrariness.[20] In light of the wide-ranging purges and arrests of civil servants and military personnel, legal proceedings against journalists, CSO workers, academics, and students, and the sheer number and diversity of organizations and sectors targeted since the 2016 coup attempt, it is unsurprising that it has become very difficult to predict who the government will target next.

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[20] In their analysis published a few days before the June 24, 2018 election in Turkey, Ekim Çağlar and Aras Lindh make a similar point to that of our interlocutors, emphasizing arbitrariness as an overall principle in today's Turkey (Çağlar and Lindh 2018).

A strong sense of vulnerability permeates many explanations of the the situation for civil society organization. To a significant extent, this is due to the random and unpredictable nature of the repression that has escalated over the past few years. This arbitrariness means that topics that are "safe" for the organizations to work on one day can suddenly be labelled treasonous the next. Some issues have always been sensitive, for example gender, the Armenian and the Kurdish issue and in recent years also the Gülen movement, but now it seems as if anything may be labelled sensitive from one day to another.

However, there are patterns even in the arbitrariness, and different groups and individuals are targeted and affected in different ways. In some cases, the closing of organizations or the targeting of individuals seems to include an intended "demonstration" effect when it comes to the choice of organizations and individuals that are targeted. Thus, the arbitrariness is more than a simple consequence of a chaotic situation and is seen by many rather as an intended effect in itself, or as the natural result of one-man rule. We shall return to this question in our concluding discussion.

Whatever the logic behind it, arbitrariness is something that occurs repeatedly in our material. As we shall see, the unpredictable character of the present situation in Turkey has consequences on many different levels, and is an undercurrent in all aspects of the shrinking space.

5.2   An everyday life in fear

Testimonies to a pervasive sense of fear for one's safety, both personally and for colleagues are also common. In line with the fact that many CSOs have been closed down and that activists have been imprisoned, fear is described as impeding the work of many organizations, as well as limiting the freedom of individuals. But it is not limited to CSOs. Fear is widespread and also "ordinary people" are said to be afraid.

The combination of the random nature of who is targeted and the extraordinary scale of imprisonment and dismissals of state employees and CSO workers has numerous consequences for how CSOs in the rights field can operate. It has also led to an increasing sense of fragmentation and isolation, which we will elaborate on further below. It has not only affected CSOs but also forced state employees to become more risk averse and conservative in their work.

For CSOs, the fear is also connected to specific events, such as the detention of ten senior HR activists at Büyükada in July 2017. This particular event is the most commonly referred to in our material. It is probably mentioned so frequently because the activists seized during this digital security conference for human rights workers were well-known and because the police did not even hesitate to imprison foreign nationals caught up in this raid. The police raid and arrests were also "spectacular", and the capture of the "Büyükada 10" is often described in our material as having had the purpose of frightening other human rights workers. "Büyükada" is related to concrete fear for one's own safety ("it could have been us") but can also be understood as a symbol. The arrest of the well-known human rights and civil society activist and businessman Osman Kavala can be understood along the same line; a case that signalled that no one is safe, and which therefore had a chilling effect on civil society.

5.3   Purges draining public institutions

Post-coup purges have hit many organizations and actors in their vicinity. Individuals and organizations felt the impact of the purges in the months following the attempted coup of 2016, as their collaboration with state and public institutions stalled, quite often because their counterparts had been removed from their posts. This appears to be true for IGOs as well as for CSOs. The public institutions were "turned upside down", counterparts in the ministries disappeared, and it was difficult to find anyone to work with at all. With the lost personnel, substantial competence disappeared and some collaboration projects had to be restarted

again from scratch or abandoned. For some, this loss in human capital meant that the implementation of given projects was set back by months or more and goals and objectives had to be adjusted given the new realities.

5.4   Control through audits

Other, less dramatic, forms of interventions than detentions and dismissals can still have a chilling effect on the work of civil society organizations. The use of inspections and audits seems to be a way to try to either exert political control over independent organizations deemed to be uncomfortably critical, or to make their work more difficult. Audits and investigations are here interpreted as targeted not at organizations suspected of financial improprieties but at organizations violating political taboos and creating problems for the government. Such audits, which can occur repeatedly or stretch back for years in an organization's history, are perceived as instruments used to control or pressure Turkish as well as international organizations.

These accounts fit the depictions in a series of media reports published last year on the topic of Turkey's crackdown on international humanitarian aid groups. In these, the denial of work permits, frequent inspections, and audits appear to have been used deliberately to prevent these organizations to do their work.[21] One former foreign aid worker (interviewed by one of the authors of this study for a separate project), who had worked for an international humanitarian organization that provided aid to Syrian refugees in Southeastern Turkey near the Syrian border, corroborated these media reports. This former aid worker interpreted these efforts by the Turkish authorities as an attempt to compel international organizations to leave so that Turkish organizations could take over their activities. Our study found evidence that that these types of

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[21] https://www.irinnews.org/news/2017/04/27/turkey-steps-crackdown-humanitarian-aid-groups.
http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkeys-war-syrian-aid-995412497
https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2017/0615/What-Turkey-s-crackdown-on-NGOs-means-for-Syrian-war-relief.

instruments (repeated audits, withheld worker permits, and intrusive inspections) are not just used against international aid organizations, but also to some extent against Turkish CSOs.

5.5   Violence and impunity

In addition to state interventions in the forms described above, some CSOs active in the rights field also have to contend with difficult working conditions stemming from community opposition to their activities. The most severe forms of societal sanctions – threats and violence – most frequently target Kurdish activists. But also people working with issues considered "immoral" ("ahlaksız") which go against the gender ideology of the government (see below), and in particular LGBTI-rights activists are exposed to threats and violence.

Violence and threats thereof can come from violent extremist groups and radical conservative organizations, sometimes in collusion with angry local mobs. However, even when threats or actual violence come from non-state actors, the state or political leaders have a responsibility to protect its citizens. One of the ways in which agents within the state are seen by many as implicitly encouraging societal violence against certain groups is by failing to punish those who commit such acts. The problem of impunity – frequently noted in e.g. the EU's and Amnesty's annual reports[22] – is mentioned in relation to individuals and organizations focusing on the rights of either LGBTI people or Kurdish minorities. Apart from organizations and individuals accused of association with the Gülen movement (which are not included in this report), these two categories of CSOs seems to be most severely targeted right now,

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[22] The question of impunity is a regular topic in the EU's country reports on Turkey. In the 2018 report, the Commission noted: "Measures adopted under the state of emergency also removed crucial safeguards protecting detainees from abuse thereby augmenting the risk of impunity, in a context where allegations of ill-treatment and torture have increased" (European Commission, 2018, p. 6). In its most recent annual report on the state of human rights in the world, Amnesty International devotes a separate rubric to the problem of impunity in Turkey. https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/turkey/report -turkey/.

but societal violence is a broader problem that affects women and children as well as Kurds and gays, lesbians, and transgendered people. Even if the perception of the state as an actor fomenting or turning a blind eye to hate and violence against certain societal groups were inaccurate, the fact that this perception is so widespread is indicative of a climate of fear, distrust, and deep polarization that may have long-lasting consequences for society at large.

5.6 Fragmentation, isolation and polarization

In general, our material confirms the view common among analyst that Turkish society today suffers from a very high degree of polarization, and this makes life increasingly difficult for rights-based CSOs. The level of polarization of the public sphere between "us" and "them" and the politicization of many of the issue on which CSOs traditionally work, translate into significant pressures on individuals and organizations to take a stand (with "us" against the "terrorists") and makes it difficult to remain independent. To refuse to choose sides and take a stand (against the "enemies" of the state) leaves you isolated, and to be defined as the enemy makes you extremely vulnerable.

A related source of isolation of CSOs is the relatively high degree of fragmentation between organizations. This is not an entirely new phenomenon in Turkish civil society but one of the consequences of the arbitrary nature of the on-going repression is that it forces CSO actors to limit ties to other organizations and individuals in order to minimize the risk that they are accused of having ties to organizations or individuals suddenly branded as terrorists – "'You don't know who is on who's side." In this way, arbitrary repression creates additional fragmentation in the civil society sphere, and leaves many activists and CSOs increasingly fragmented and isolated.

Fragmentation, isolation, and polarization occur between different sectors in civil society, as certain topics are deemed "safe"

whereas others (and thus the CSOs active in sectors where those topics occur) are considered unacceptable by the state (see more on this below). Due to the arbitrary nature of these judgements by the state, fragmentation also occurs between different actors in the same sector, between organizations, and between individuals.

In our material, some interpret this as a conscious strategy by the government, and many note that it has a high price. This may take the form of difficulties in working with others and in certain parts of the country, as well as about the growing distance between individuals as well as organizations. However, organizations at the same time still communicate freely with the persons and organizations in their own network, despite the risks. To many seasoned activists in the human rights and Kurdish rights fields especially, the situation today may be more acute, but is not new.

5.7   GONGOs crowding out civil society

The phenomenon of civil society organizations subservient to the government, or GONGOs, has been growing rapidly for the past few years. GONGOs are independent on paper, but in reality they depend on the government for much of their funding and act in conformity with its ideological agenda.

Turkish GONGOs are predominantly service-based, focusing on issues like faith and family, topics close to the conservative politics of the ruling party. This illustrates the increasing overlap that we noted earlier between the two categories of CSOs in the corporatist-state network and service-based social affairs foundations. One of the archetypal GONGOs in Turkey today is KaDem or the Women and Democracy Association, whose deputy chair is Erdoğan's youngest daughter, Sümeyye Erdoğan Bayraktar. This is not a coincidence, as it is arguably particularly for women's rights organizations that GONGOs constitute a substantial threat. They absorb financial resources from both national and international donors and increasingly fill the space previously occupied by independent CSOs. Due to their size and close ties to the government, GONGOs like KaDem also become an instrument

of control; a "ministry in itself" with significant resources and power.

The picture that emerges from our material is that GONGOs now play a substantial role in the shrinking space for independent CSOs in Turkey. GONGOs not only become powerful through access to government funding, but they also drain the available funding for independent, rights-based CSOs. The funding that was previously distributed to CSOs now goes to a few large GONGOs. This is true both for internal Turkish funding, and for funding from international organizations, to the extent that such funding is distributed via Turkish government agencies.

GONGOs are also an important part of the everyday life of those working in multilateral organizations (IGOs), as they are faced with demands from Turkish government representatives to include them in their projects and events, at the expense of independent women's rights organizations. This means that GONGOs not only metaphorically "crowd out" independent CSOs by taking up much of the funding in a given field but also do so in more literal ways, by e.g. taking up limited spaces at international conferences allotted to Turkish CSOs. These international venues can be important to break the isolation of CSO workers and provide access to valuable international networks, so the loss of access to them constitutes one aspect of the shrinking space for independent Turkish civil society.

5.8   Growing conservatism and a new gender ideology

The emergence of GONGOs in the field of women's issues is also part of the shift in how the government talks about and acts in relation to gender equality and women's rights. For many years, with a peak when Fatma Şahin (AKP) was the Minister of Family and Social Policy (2011-2013), a wide range of women's organizations (including feminist/rights based) were invited by the state for consultations on various gender equality/women's issues. With few exceptions, these consultations have ceased and increasingly now

only organizations close to the government are invited to consultations or partnerships with the state.

Although the women's movement is not at the moment the most heavily targeted group in terms of organization closures or direct violence, the weakening of women's rights is nevertheless at the core of the growing conservatism in Turkey. In Turkey, corresponding with a trend in many other countries, the government does not overthrow the gender equality agenda but fills it with new content: "gender equality" is replaced with "gender justice" – equivalent to another term used in many other contexts the term, namely "gender equity" (c.f. Sida 2016). Sare Aydın Ylmaz, the president of the GONGO KaDem, refers to gender equality as a concept that "provides monotypes for women grounded in Western culture" and "masculinizes" women, while "gender justice" recognizes differences among women and between women and men (Yılmaz 2015). The concept emphasizes complementarity between and different liabilities of women and men, women's role as mothers and equity, balance and fair treatment rather than equality and rights (Yabancı 2016, Diner 2018). This "new" gender ideology is expressed in speeches by the president and other AKP representatives, emphasizing for example need for women to have more children and behave and dress modestly, encourage marriage at young age and the necessity to restrict abortion (Diner 2018). It is also concretized in legislations and regulations, for example lowering the age of marriage, allowing imams to conduct marriages and – in practice if not legally – circumscribing the right to abortion.[23]

5.9   Different groups, different patterns of repression

The attempted coup in July 2016 opened up for an accelerating and systematic crackdown on different actors in Turkish society. As shown above, many parts of civil society are affected. However, they

[23] An independent platform linked to a broad range of feminist organizations in Turkey, has opened a web platform that documents the changes in women's and gender rights during the AKP-government; http://akpkarnesi.catlakzemin.com.

are affected in different ways, in distinctive phases, and to varying degrees.

Established human rights defenders in Turkey have a long history of state persecution. After the attempted coup of 2016, however, tens of thousands of Gülenists, a group whose members did not have significant previous experience of being on the receiving end of political action or political violence (unlike, say activists on the Left or Kurds), were imprisoned and dismissed *en masse*. Since our focus has been on rights-based CSOs and human rights defenders in Turkey, we have not interviewed representatives of CSOs affiliated with the Gülen movement, most of which were service-based. Moreover, people accused of being Gülenists who believe that they have had their rights violated rarely seek support from traditional rights-based Turkish CSOs due to the deep social and political divides in Turkey.

The distinction between "rights-based" and "service-based" organizations that we introduced earlier is present in our material. The former category includes CSOs that work on human rights or the rights of women or minorities like Kurds or LGBTI people, and the latter – service-based organizations – include charity organizations and foundations providing humanitarian assistance, and are often faith-based. After the first period following the coup, the crackdowns were at least partly redirected so that rights-based organizations increasingly became the target.

Among the rights-based CSOs, the situation is varied. Human rights organizations – especially those dealing with the Kurdish issue or operating in the Southeast – are typically described as targeted with harsher methods than for example women's organizations, and also as more experienced and skilled in resistance and security measures. As discussed above, LGBTI organizations are almost unanimously mentioned as the ones who are most vulnerable and face the most serious harassment and violence. While women's organizations are not at this moment bearing the brunt of government repression, there is a concern that they may become the next target, also because of their alliances with the LGBTI-movement.

Three professions, which are closely linked to but not typically included in most accounts of organized civil society, have been targeted particularly hard: legal professionals, journalists, and academics. Here, too, the extensive purges that took place after the attempted coup of July 2016 (but which had been initiated prior to the coup, especially in the judiciary) first and foremost targeted people and organizations accused of association with the Gülen movement: media organizations, universities, and schools, and large numbers of loyalists within the judiciary, police, and many ministries. But in the repressive atmosphere that followed, and in the context of the (many times extended) state of emergency, the government significantly expanded the scope of repression to include large numbers of independent professionals in these three categories who had no credible connection to the Gülen movement.

The situation of these three groups deserve particular attention because when their ability to perform their work is limited, it also has far-reaching consequences for other groups. Some of the consequences of the persecution of lawyers have been discussed above in terms of impunity and in terms of the arbitrariness and unpredictability that follows when the rule of law is hollowed out. Needless to say, when independent and critical journalists are silenced, democracy itself is at stake, and it also reduces the ability of CSOs to conduct advocacy, and to publicize reports and findings concerning abuse and rights violations, all important components of their work.

Likewise, a competent and vibrant civil society depends on independent scholars who produce reports for them and, more generally, knowledge important for their organizations. This means that not only academic freedom suffers when academics producing critical work are targeted as they have been recently, but all parts of society. Moreover, the repression of academia directly impacts many rights-based CSOs, since many of the people working for these organizations are themselves academics.

6. Coping strategies and countermeasures

As pointed out above, arbitrariness is the word that may be used to summarize the overall situation in Turkey. This arbitrariness makes coping strategies and countermeasures difficult to formulate. Nevertheless, our material contains a wide range of examples of how actors navigate the present landscape. It is clear that the civil society actors in today's Turkey are not giving in or giving up, but that many instead resist and find coping strategies and counter measures. In this chapter, we look at some of these.

6.1 Choosing topics and activities wisely

Practically every CSO in Turkey today has to be mindful of what topics they can and cannot work on without risking government intervention. In this context, staying under the radar becomes a strategy. This includes a range of precautions, from generally keeping a lower public profile to more substantial changes. Hence, all independent Turkish CSOs that have survived the purges of the past few years try to keep somewhat of a low profile, be "smart" about choosing topics and finding "niches" that the government does not pay as much attention to, and be modest in their analyses. Others communicate what they want and even on risky topics, but avoid needlessly provocative language when doing so.

Given the dramatically shrinking space that we have described so far in this report, everyone working on civil rights, women's rights, LBTQ issues, or Kurdish rights, in any of the remaining independent media outlets, or just in CSOs that are not affiliated with the ruling AKP or its allies in Turkey today has to muster a significant dose of courage. Choosing any of the "coping" or "adaptation" strategies discussed below should not be seen acts of bending to repression or "selling out" but as strategic choices intended to ensure the survival of their organizations.

Regardless of the bravery of many human rights defenders in Turkey, the government's repression has an effect on the topics that

CSOs can and do work on, and on the kinds of activities they can and do hold, just as the outright media repression has led to widespread self-censorship. We can thus differentiate between the direct effect of repression – the closing down of certain organizations or media outlets and jailing of individuals who go too far in testing the boundaries – and the knock-on effect of scaring others to self-censor and adjust in order to avoid being the target of direct repression.

6.2   Changing aims, objectives and time horizons

Another coping strategy is to be ready to change the aims and objectives of organizations and of existing projects in light of changing contexts, and to lower ambitions and expectations on output and outcomes in activities. A related consequence is that many CSOs find it difficult or impossible to maintain longer-term perspectives in their work. Some projects need to have a shorter time horizon as it is becoming increasingly difficult to plan for the future, whereas deadlines in other projects have to be extended due to difficulties in achieving objectives on time. This causes challenges for rights-based CSOs in Turkey since many of them work with foreign donors – whether independent foundations, bilateral donors, or multilateral organizations like the EU, UN agencies, the Council of Europe – who may have strict requirements on reporting and results.

6.3   Being selective on who to work with

Polarization and arbitrariness make the question of who to work with more sensitive. Organizations and individuals have cut ties with other organizations or individuals to minimize the risk of being targeted as having links to a terrorist /terrorist organization in case a partner is accused of being just that in the future. Traditionally, Turkish CSOs gained strength from having prominent individuals like well-known public intellectuals, writers, businesspeople or simply other leading human rights workers affiliated with their

organization, e.g. by sitting on their executive boards. Now, an increasing number of individuals are reluctant to maintain such affiliations, being worried for their own sake but also for the sake of the organization, that their affiliation could become a liability for the CSO.

The necessity to reflect on whether or not to work with others is not only relevant internally, between Turkish organizations, but occurs also in other directions: for CSOs in the relation to foreign donors, international organizations and the state; for multilateral organizations in relation to CSOs and the state; and for donors in relation to multilaterals, the state and CSOs. So when bilateral relations between Turkey and certain European governments hit rock bottom in the spring of 2017, for example, ties to donors or organizations in those countries became real liabilities for Turkish CSOs. Although this is not entirely new – CSOs in Turkey have always been forced to reflect on who to align with – the current level of arbitrariness makes it difficult to navigate and forsee which organization is expected to be controversial tomorrow. As in the case of choosing topics and activities, considerations about collaboration also undergo self-censorship.

As mentioned, multilateral organizations (IGOs) have to deal with pressure from the state to collaborate with GONGOs instead of CSOs, particularly in the field of women's rights. Government "lists" of organizations that are to be invited to conferences and events are subject to constant and stressful negotiations in IGOs contacts with state and local officials. Even while they are adapting, IGOs do not necessarily fully give in to the pressure but instead try to find ways to give space for CSOs to be present and heard in discussions with the government.

In sum, however, it is clear that one of the effects of the manner in which the space for civil society has shrunk in Turkey is that the fragmentation of the rights-based civil society sphere in Turkey has increased, leaving many CSOs increasingly isolated.

6.4   Countering fragmentation and isolation

One consequence of the shrinking space, then, is that it has become riskier for CSOs to have contacts with each other. This includes the ability to have meetings in person. However, meetings are an essential ingredient of a vibrant civil society. Those who still have a space to act feel that they have a responsibility to use that space to invite others and make it possible for different actors to meet with other organizations. CSOs have also provided space for academics to meet with civil society actors and also with each other, as the space within universities is shrinking. Some of the most vulnerable organizations try to provide moral support to each other, finding strength in and protecting each other.

When the meeting places are limited, it may also open up for actors who work with related issues and who previously have been working parallel to meet and collaborate. This might also build on the process started during the Gezi protests, where new alliances between rights-based organizations were established and where issues of one group were integrated in the agenda of other (Yalçın 2015, Eslen Ziya & Erhart 2017). Thus, there are conscious efforts made by CSOs in Turkey to counteract the fragmentation and isolation of human rights defenders and rights-based CSOs.

The developments over the last few years have also created new opportunities for some, as international attention has focused on their situation. Given that domestic sources of funding and support has dried up for independent CSOs, increased international attention has provided both an important lifeline when it comes to funding and valuable access to international networks to compensate for increasing isolation at home.

6.5   Countering polarization

Hence, it is important for CSO staff to meet with likeminded CSO workers and together find ways to cope with the shrinking space and counteract fragmentation and isolation, or simply to feel like

they are not alone. However, it is also important to meet with organizations on the opposite side of the political spectrum in efforts to break down or mitigate the severe polarization in the country. This includes refusing to demonize those who choose to support the government that is responsible for the shrinking space.

It is easy to confuse fragmentation and polarization, but while the two are related they are also distinct phenomena. The fragmentation of rights-based CSOs is a function of the increasing risks of maintaining alliances with likeminded organizations due to the danger that one of them might be targeted as enemies of the state, which may then spill over to your own organization. This leaves many human rights defenders increasingly isolated, as we have explained above. Polarization instead refers to the increasing emotional and sociological distance between organizations on different sides of the political spectrum. If they used to see each other as competitors, they now increasingly view each other as enemies. Countering polarization thus requires a different approach than that of mitigating fragmentation.

Fragmentation leaves CSOs isolated and weakened. Polarization need not have the same effect on individual organizations. Here, the concern is rather that it is bad for Turkish society as a whole. Countering polarization is thus a benefit to society, but for some organizations, breadth of membership or participation can also serve as a source of protection. It may be more difficult for the government to crack down on an organization or a project involving people from different and opposing groups in society, including those allied with the government.

6.6   Growing conservatism – but also resistance and a space to act for the women's movement

The women's movement is a group within civil society that has been at the forefront of the resistance against growing conservatism and authoritarianism, from Gezi and onwards (c.f. Eslen Ziya & Erhart 2017). As discussed above, women's organizations still have a space

to act. One of the authors were present at the yearly International Women's Day demonstration at Istiklal Caddesi on the 8th of March this year, and according to news reports this was more crowded than it has been for many years. With organizations on the South East as exceptions, women's organizations have not been directly targeted by closures and arrestes. However, the room for maneovre is undeniably limited, and the women's movement is guarding and protesting erosion of rights rather than being able to move anything forward, and actual repression might increase in the months and years to come.

However, there is also a hope that it will not be possible to completely destroy the victories for women's rights in Turkey that have been achieved already. Not the least because many of these positive developments were initiated under the AKP government, including changes in the legislation and the acknowledgement of violence against women as a societal problem and responsibility of the state (see e.g. Eldén & Ekal 2015). Even if the ruling party always has been conservative and that women's rights are moving in the completely wrong direction now, the party have also always had a strong women's grassroots movement and are in need of votes from women.

6.7   Concluding remarks Part 2

After a period of democratic and civil society expansion during the first years of AKP rule, Turkey has now undergone an authoritarian transition with extensive political purges following the coup attempt of 2016, a hollowing out of the rule of law, politicization of most institutions of governance, and consolidation of power in a presidential system that risks devolving into one-man rule. This de-democratization has been coupled with dramatic restrictions on the freedom of speech and a shrinking of the democratic space for civil society.

Our fieldwork shows a dire picture. Turkish CSOs have to contend with a degree of arbitrariness and unpredictability in government repression that creates a climate of fear, fragmentation, and isolation in the civil society sphere. Repression is widespread

but uneven. While mainly Gülen-affiliated organizations were targeted in the months after the coup attempt, CSOs working on human rights, and in particular Kurdish and LGBTI rights, have increasingly become targets. Instruments of repression ranges from arrests and closures, intrusive and selective inspections and audits, to redirecting available funding away from independent organizations toward GONGOs instead. The latter are particularly prominent in the areas of women's and family affairs and there constitute a de facto threat to the viability of independent women's rights organizations.

All independent CSOs are forced to adapt in the face of these changes and do so in varied ways. They have to think carefully about which topics they can work on and how they can present their work. Some are defiant, while others chose to avoid criticizing the government directly. Some focus on rights violations while others try to engage the government and conservative groups to try to mitigate the polarization in the country. Some are more or less forced to go underground to shield their staff from physical attacks from radical groups. Organizations and individuals have had to cut ties with other civil society actors, but there are also attempts to counter one's isolation by finding strength and community with other organizations in the same predicament. Growing conservatism has adversely affected the rights of both women and the LGBTI community, but when it comes to CSOs, those working on LGBTI issues have faced heavy repression while women's organizations still have a space to act.

We now turn to the question of what kinds of challenges the shrinking space that we have described above present to Swedish reform cooperation with Turkey. After describing the broad features of Swedish aid to Turkey, we then report the findings of our document analysis, fieldwork, and interviews with donor representatives with respect to the performance of Swedish aid in the context of a rapidly shrinking space for civil society in Turkey.

Part 3: Democracy promotion in the context of shrinking democratic space

7. Sweden's reform cooperation: EU accession and strengthening human rights and democracy

Swedish development cooperation with Turkey started already in 1992, although in small volumes. With the first strategy in 2002, the volume of the support slightly increased and has continued to do so with the second strategy in 2005, the third in 2010, and the present strategy that guides the development cooperation from 2014 and until 2020 (Utrikesdepartmentet 2005, 2010, 2014).

Ever since the beginning, the focus has been on human rights and the strengthening of democracy in Turkey. With the 2005 strategy an emphazis on women's rights and gender equality was added, and with the present also rule of law. Ever since Turkey's EU accession negotiations were initiated in 2005, this process has been the point of departure for Sweden's development with Turkey. The overall aim is specified in the current *Results Strategy for Sweden's Reform Cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020* as being "to assist the countries in the Eastern Partnership, the Western Balkans and Turkey to forge closer links with the EU" (Utrikesdepartementet, 2014, p. 2). This entails supporting these countries as they enact reforms as part of their EU accession processes. Hence, the Swedish government and Sida often use the concept of "reform cooperation" to describe the developent cooperation with Turkey, and we use the same terminology to avoid confusion.

Swedish reform cooperation with Turkey is unique for Swedish bilateral aid in the sense that it combines two forms of development cooperation, distributed through the Embassy in Ankara and the

Consulate General in Istanbul.[24] Both follow the same strategy for reform cooperation with Turkey, but while the support via Ankara is administered by Sida and thus follows the procedures for Sida interventions, the support via Istanbul follows the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' procedures for foreign aid. The amounts differ; approximately 70 million per year are distributed via Ankara with a typical intervention being 15 million SEK, and 7 million via Istanbul with a typical sum of 100-150 000 SEK per intervention. And while the administrative burden on organizations that receives support via the Embassy in Ankara is quite heavy and the control rigorous, it is less so for organizations supported via the Consulate in Istanbul. With some exceptions, Ankara gives core funding, i.e. funds an organization or part of an organization's core activities including salaries, office etc. Istanbul funds specific projects and/or gives "seed funding" intended to allow organizations to start up and/or expand their activities. In several cases, organizations begin their partnership with Sweden having support via Istanbul, and when they grow and show stability and positive outcomes they are transferred to Ankara and receive a substantially increased support from Sida. In this report, we call this combined model the "Seed/core funding model".

The "expected results" of the present strategy for Turkey were specified as "strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights and a more fully developed state under the rule of law" (Utrikesdepartementet 2014). These results were to be fulfilled through a focus on a) a strengthened public administration and judicial system, and b) increased enjoyment of rights and a greater opportunity to exercise democratic influence. Under this umbrella, the strategy focuses on public administration and the judicial system ensuring fundamental rights, a reduction in gender-based violence, a more pluralistic civil society, fulfilment of national and international commitments on human rights, gender equality and

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[24] Although this model is unique for bilateral development cooperation, the importance of plurality also in terms of size is emphasized also in the strategy that governs support to civil society via Swedish CSOs. The strategy states that "(s)mall-scale activities should not be an obstacle to being considered for support" (Utrikesdepartementet 2016, p. 7).

non-discrimination and women and men's equal power to shape society and their own lives.

In light of the democratic backslide described in sections 4 and 5 above, Sida observes in the 2017 mid-term review of the results strategy that "no or very few of the assumptions made during the operationalization in 2014 are valid in 2017" (Sida 2017b). Sida points at increasing polarization due to the Kurdish conflict in the Southeast, an increasingly authoritarian government with no or limited interaction with the civil society, a further deterioration of the situation for women and girls, and how several other groups have been deprived of their human rights, including politicians, journalists, academicians, and human rights defenders. Sida draws the conclusion that there is a need for adaptation in the implementation of the strategy portfolio.

The midterm review summarizes the needed adjustments in reform cooperation as follows:

- "Longer term contributions for when the EU accession process has been revived should focus on civil society organisations (CSOs) in the areas of gender equality, LGBTI rights, human rights & democracy.

- Balance the above with increased flexibility with a focus on supporting CSOs survival in the short-term.

- Support to the GoT [Government of Turkey] should have a strong Swedish political priority (e.g. migration) and a clear Swedish comparative advantage.

- Continued focus on implementing the *Feminist Foreign Policy*, with gender integrated in the whole portfolio as well as through specific contributions.

- Seek synergies with the *Strategy for the Syria Crisis* where possible, and of common benefit to both strategies." (Sida 2017b) [25]

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[25] This last part, to identify any significant synergies with the *Strategy for the Syria Crisis* in current projects and partnerships, lies outside the scope of this study.

Focus still lies on improving ties with the EU, in the present situation formulated as a preparation for a revived process, and Sida will continue to prioritize gender equality. However, new partnership agreements will be sought with civil society actors – particularly in the most affected sectors (e.g. human rights/democracy including freedom of expression) and, when possible, in geographic areas most affected by violent conflict – whereas cooperation with the government will have low priority. Moreover, Sida recognizes a need for more flexibility in the portfolio, in some cases including shorter agreements with lower volumes (Ibid).

Thus, the expectations on fulfilment of the objectives of the strategy have been lowered due to the situation, and the conclusion is that the results will not be achieved as the situation is rapidly deteriorating and "Swedish funding can hardly affect changes at country level" (Sida 2017b). The changes in the portfolio includes an increase in support on the rights holder side and a decrease on the duty bearer side, which in this context means a greater focus on human rights and the possibility to exercise democratic influence and less on public administration and judicial systems. Moreover, support to democratic actors at the grass-root level is emphasized, also beyond the "usual circles" and with a particular focus on actors in the fields of gender equality, LGBTI rights and human rights (Ibid).

When it comes to the question of Sweden's ability to "affect changes at country level" in Turkey, it is important to keep the broader context of the relationship in mind. An applicant for EU accession since 1987, NATO member since 1952, and member of the Council of Europe since its founding year of 1949, Turkey is in several respects very different from the typical beneficiary countries of Swedish development cooperation. Turkey's GDP is nearly twice that of Sweden's, it is the fourth largest export market for goods from the EU, and it has NATO's second largest standing army. European foreign policy makers have long operated under the assumption that few problems vexing the EU today, such as migration from Syria, returning ISIS fighters, the civil war in Syria, or dependence on Russian natural gas, can be solved effectively without Turkish cooperation. While this view is quite reasonably

questioned by an increasing number of critics who argue that Turkey is no longer a credible ally or that it is unethical to bargain with an increasingly authoritarian regime, many foreign policy experts maintain that it is necessary to engage Turkey, partially for lack of a better strategy, partially out of fear that alienation would only worsen the situation for pro-democracy actors in Turkey. Regardless of the merits of the arguments on either side, by all accounts, even the EU, which far outspends Sweden with its IPA funding and refugee facility, has lost most of its leverage over the ruling AKP and today clearly lacks the ability to motivate Ankara to pursue democratic reforms.

Moreover, Swedish reform cooperation with its focus on human rights, gender equality, democracy, and rule of law is only one aspect of a broader bilateral relationship between Sweden and Turkey, which covers the above-mentioned areas of EU-accession, trade, migration, and counterterrorism, but also such matters as tourism and the Turkish diaspora in Sweden. We shall return to what this context means in our concluding discussion but it is useful to keep it in mind when considering the potential for Swedish aid to help Turkish civil society to push back against the shrinking democratic space in Turkey.

8.   Swedish aid in a shrinking democratic space

As we noted when introducing the concept of a shrinking space, it was first used to describe restrictions on recipients of foreign aid by governments unwilling to let international actors and foreign states fund democratic actors in a society. While CSOs with foreign funding have been targeted and feel the effects of the shrinking space in ways that we have described in this report, the government of Turkey has not yet turned to the more drastic measures that we have seen in e.g. Russia to limit or even prohibit foreign aid. There are risks and drawbacks associated with receiving foreign aid in Turkey as well, but we also see an increased dependence on international donors due to difficulties for civil society to fund their

activities domestically. With the image of the shrinking space in Turkey today as it is described in the previous chapters as the framework, in this Chapter 8 we look at the possibilities and challenges for Swedish aid in today's Turkey.

8.1 Increased significance of Swedish support

In the current situation, Turkish civil society to a large extent depends on funding from abroad. It is clear from our material that Sweden has a good reputation in Turkey, compared to other foreign donors. In a situation where funding from Turkey has either shrunk or dried out completely, the significance of the Swedish support increases. The kind of long-term funding and core support that Sida provides is always crucial for the work of civil society organizations regardless of circumstances, and it is even more so now. However, it is not just core funding that is important. The short-term, project and event-based support in smaller amounts from the Swedish Consulate in Istanbul is also important in the current situation.

Moreover, Sida does not only provide financial support, but are active in capacity building, developing organizations, and in training. Sida also provides meeting places in a situation where, as we have described, isolation and fragmentation are growing. When the conditions under which CSOs work are increasingly harsh, and the pressure from the society makes it difficult to prioritize the internal capacity of the organizations, these aspects of donor support become even more important for the sustainability of an independent civil society.

8.2 The Turkish aid model – combining seed and core

As described above, the reform cooperation with Turkey is a unique combination in Swedish bilateral aid of short-term project support primarily provided by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the smaller short-term grants awarded by the Consulate in

Istanbul, and long-term core support in larger sums provided by Sida through the Embassy in Ankara. The pros and cons with these two models of support are relevant in relation to the shrinking space. Even in less dramatic contexts than today's Turkey, core support is important for a vibrant and independent civil society as it gives prerequisites to set the agenda and keep a long-term perspective. The shrinking democratic space further underlines the importance of this core support. When human rights organizations are fighting for their survival, project-based funding is not enough to keep them strong.

When CSOs face a constant threat of being closed down and must fight for their survival on a daily basis, project-based funding risks re-directing focus and energy from core activities and makes it difficult to adjust to rapidly changing conditions for the organization. Core funding provides a possibility for organizations to keep standing even when the situation becomes more difficult.

At the same time, many of the rights-based CSOs in Turkey are small, and it would be difficult for them to manage the large amounts that Sida core support provides. Swedish donor representatives interviewed noted that there is no intrinsic value to large grants: "To pump in large amounts of money in an organization does not necessarily mean that the quality of activities improve."

It is not unusual that grants are smaller in reform cooperation focused on promoting democracy and human rights than in traditional aid or development cooperation. But the Turkish context provides additional obstacles to scale. Having been operating in a generally inhospitable environment for many years, Turkish CSOs active in the fields of human rights, democracy promotion, gender equality and LGBTI rights tend to have limited numbers of members and volunteers and many of them are consequently rather small organizations. The current shrinking of democratic space naturally adds additional pressures. In a situation where lower ambitions in activities and lower expectations on outcomes and objectives is necessary, larger amounts of money is not necessarily an advantage for a small organization.

Grants for projects and events can also function as "seed money" that helps a growing organization in its early stages. Many of the CSOs that today receive support from Ankara started the relationship with Sweden as a donor having support from Istanbul. Scaling up and growing an organization is more than just a financial matter. As already mentioned, Sida also offers hands-on training on e.g. management and budgeting for its partners, which is an important ingredient in the institutionalization of an organization.

8.3   The importance of flexibility

The mid-term review of Sweden's reform cooperation with Turkey underlines the importance of maintaining flexibility. Many other discussions about how donors should adjust in contexts characterised by a shrinking democratic space similarly emphasise flexibility. Our research shows that Sweden as a donor in general does live up to this ideal as a flexible and accessible donor with which it is possible to communicate problems and unforeseen events; one that is aware of the current situation in Turkey and open to dialogue and changing conditions. The focus lies on results rather than details, and there is a constructive attitude to challenges as something that should be solved, also when these challenges are of political character.

Flexibility in the current situation has several meanings, related to the different forms of support that the Turkish aid includes. Generally speaking, it entails being open to partners' concerns and changing needs. It can mean being able to adjust to sudden political/legal changes by giving small and quick support in acute situations and/or agreeing to changes in budgets, expected project output, or aims and objectives. Sida's results-based management and reporting focus is well placed to manage this, as opposed to a more rigid focus on receipts and detailed financial reporting demanded by other key donors like the European Union, which does not as easily lend itself to flexibility. With the focus on results and objectives rather than a fixed set of activities included in a grant application that may have been drafted years ago, means and activities can change when circumstances do.

In a rapidly changing political context, short-term project grants provide flexibility by allowing for adjustments between grant applications. But at the same time, core and long-term support also give CSOs a flexibility of different kind. It allows organizations to adjust to a rapidly changing context without constantly asking permission from a donor and instead being able to concentrate on the core activities and overall aim of the organization. In a stressful political environment, it is also a relief not to have to devote time and energy too often on short-term grant applications.

8.4   Unstructured application procedure

The flexibility of Sweden as a donor in the face of potential changes in objectives and timeframes is high, as is the openness to dialogue. However, there seems to be one particular backside of the flexibility coin that concerns the funding application procedure.

From the donor this is expressed as concern about the quality of applications that they receive. Even though they know that the analytical capacity of the organizations is high, the quality of the applications often does not live up to required standards. One explanation is that the organizations in Turkey are not used to working with traditional long-term development actors, as Turkey is not a traditional aid country. Unlike partners in many other countries where Swedish aid has a longer history and where several bilateral donors are present, the CSOs in Turkey are not established professional organizations built around the provision of services in large-scale projects funded by foreign aid. Many Turkish partners need to learn what is expected from them as recipients of bilateral aid as this is a new kind of relationship to them.

Under the current circumstances it can also be hard for CSO workers to find the time and focus to write applications and do paperwork. The lack of clear instructions seems to be an obstacle here. If what is expected is not explicitly communicated, it is hard to fulfil high quality demands. The combination of vague instructions and high demands is stressful in itself. Add a stressful context of shrinking democratic space with fear, arbitrariness, and constant change and it is unsurprising that the criterion of a high-

quality application is not always met. This might seem like an issue of minor importance in the current situation, but in the everyday life of managing the funding of an organization it is significant.

8.5   Receiving foreign aid as a (necessary) risk

In recent years, nationalist politicians or pro-government pundits in Turkey have often pointed to foreign support to raise suspicion about civil society actors in Turkey, portraying them as foreign agents. Financial support from Sweden is less problematic than support from certain other countries, but that does not mean that Swedish funding provides any kind of additional protection from repression. On the contrary, it may be a risk, as any kind of foreign money can be used to label an organization or an individual.

However, in the current situation one also has to raise caution against putting too much emphasis on the risks connected to foreign funding. To most independent CSOs in Turkey today, the main risk is not having access to any funding at all. The main responsibility of Sweden as a donor can be formulated as supporting organizations as long as possible. The CSOs themselves are better judges of the potential risks and benefits associated with foreign support.

These concerns point toward the question of how bilateral relations and politics may affect the level of risk associated with receiving foreign aid. The risks associated with receiving foreign aid are closely connected to the current bilateral relationship between Turkey and the donor government in question. Even if Swedish funding is politically less sensitive than support from certain other countries, this might quickly change if a problem arises in the relationship between the two countries. Given the unpredictable nature of Turkish foreign policy today, this introduces an unavoidable element of uncertainty in the Swedish reform cooperation with Turkey.

8.6   Shifting the aid toward civil society: civil society perspectives

Support to Turkey through the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is in the process of being redirected from support to (and via) the state towards direct support to CSOs. This is in line with the above-discussed changes in the Swedish support. While no Swedish-sponsored projects or partnerships with Turkish government entities are being cancelled for this reason, the changes pointed out in the mid-term review include a lower priority on reform cooperation with the state as the main beneficiary or partner when setting up new projects.

We asked experts and representatives both from Turkish civil society writ large and from international organizations with significant experience in Turkey about this shift on the part of donors like the EU and Sweden. All groups generally support this shift. They agree that foreign support to civil society is needed in order to sustain some level of democracy in Turkey. If it is not possible to make changes today, the support should aim at building resilience for the future. When the situation in Turkey changes, there must be a robust civil society base still left to build on.

Just as the question of whether to engage or isolate the Turkish government over its increasing authoritarianism divides western experts, activists, and politicians, we noticed a similar divide in Turkey. Some believe that all support to the Turkish government should be avoided. Others point to costs if the shift away from contacts with state institutions is taken too far. If more or less all support is redirected from the government to CSOs, there is an increased risk that civil society actors will be considered surrogates for foreign powers or labelled as "agents". Moreover, as difficult as the political environment in Turkey is today, development cooperation can still provide channels for dialogue between international actors interested in promoting democracy and a vibrant civil society, and the Turkish government. Several of the Turkish representatives that we spoke to believed that if foreign actors shun contacts with government institutions completely, in bilateral relations or through multilateral organizations, those

institutions are more likely to move even more far away from democracy, human rights, and gender equality standards.

As a complement or alternative to working with state agencies and ministries, there are still a number of municipalities where it is possible to find constructive counterparts. Fruitful collaboration still appears possible on the local level in certain parts of the country, especially on less politicized and controversial topics.

In sum, there are several distinct risks associated with a too dramatic shift away from including the government as a partner. One risk is that if foreign support exclusively, or to a very large extent, goes to CSOs, it may make them vulnerable to accusations of being surrogates of foreign powers. The development in e.g. Russia and Hungary is used as a reference point here. Moreover, if the government itself has nothing to lose financially from doing so, it can more easily decide to erect legal barriers to foreign aid. Another risk is that this shift may close important doors for dialogue and influence that still remain open. Yet another risk is that reformists that have not been purged from government institutions would be left all alone.

8.7   Shifting the aid towards civil society: donor perspectives

When we brought up these reflections on the potential downsides with the shift from working with the state toward supporting civil society in our interviews with representatives from the Swedish MFA and Sida, they, too, generally supported the shift but indicated that they are aware of the potential downsides. Given the cricumstances, this shift is considered reasonable and necessary, as the civil society is in great need of resources.

Moreover, the extensive purges in government institutions have now left many of them so weakened that few results could reasonably be expected from support aiming at strengthening democracy, human rights and gender equality from within these institutions. There is a lack of personnel in general and of personnel competent enough to work on these issues in particular. Especially

during the State of emergency after the coup attempt, remaining staff was often fearful of taking any initiatives without running them through their superiors, and so on all the way to the top, which left many government agencies and ministries more or less paralyzed. Thus, also from a practical point of view it makes good sense to divert some of the funding to other actors in society, and to spread it to a broader range of actors.

Some donor representatives were sympathetic to the argument that it is valuable to retain some degree of cooperation with state actors and institutions. The arguments were in line with the above; that a complete shift could make civil society more vulnerable, and that some kind of continued relationship with state institutions is important. Even though – or perhaps rather because – the rule of law is under serious threat in Turkey today, some kind of cooperation even in this field was seen as preferable. In order to achieve lasting change when it comes to the rule of law, they argued, you need to engage with and help reform state institutions.

Several donor representatives brought up the fact that the authoritarian turn in Turkey has now also become a domestic political matter in Sweden, and that even if there could be good reasons to retain partnerships with the state, it would now be very difficult to sell that to a Swedish audience. The willingness to pay for development cooperation ("biståndsvilja") is high in Sweden, but it requires good arguments. It is not always easy to explain how development cooperation works, also because the question is often posed in a negative way. In a situation of shrinking democratic space, it becomes more difficult to argue for the relevance of aid with the state as the direct or the indirect recipient. It is difficult to explain why aid goes to a regime that violates human rights, even if not doing so could put Turkish civil society actors at greater risk.

Part 4: Conclusions and recommendations

9.   Conclusions

The overall aim of Swedish reform cooperation with the region is to "assist the countries in the Eastern Partnership, the Western Balkans and Turkey to forge closer links with the EU" (Utrikesdepartementet, 2014, p. 2). The expected result in the 2014-20 strategy for Turkey was "strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights and a more fully developed state under the rule of law" (p. 5). As we have seen in this study (and as noted in the midterm review), reaching this goal has become increasingly challenging in today's Turkey. As a donor Sweden actively deals with this challenge by making formal adjustments in the implementation of the reform cooperation, as well as in the everyday interaction with partners in Turkey.

In this concluding Part 3 we will return to our research questions and make remarks on 1) what the shrinking democratic space in Turkey entails for civil society organizations working on topics of importance for democracy, human rights and gender equality, and 2) whether Swedish development/reform cooperation with Turkey adequately has adapted to this challenging context.

9.1   Experiencing a shrinking democratic space

How is the shrinking democratic space defined and experienced by civil society organizations whose work support democracy, human rights and gender equality in Turkey?

The democratic space in Turkey has been shrinking dramatically in recent years and almost any civil society organization not affiliated with the AKP or its allies feels the squeeze. This development has been corroborated extensively by qualitative research on the political situation in Turkey and is visible in quantitative and

comparative indexes on freedom, press freedom, and the rule of law. The shrinking of democratic space and its serious effects on civil society are further confirmed by this study.

If there is one word that can summarize the image of the shrinking space that appears in our material, it is arbitrariness. This is expressed in variations of keywords like "arbitrary" and "unpredictable" to describe the manner in which the space has been shrinking, who has been targeted when, and for which reasons. It is associated with a fear of arbitrary arrests and closures that constitute the core of the shrinking space for civil society in Turkey today. But the sense of arbitrariness goes further than that; it overshadows many aspects of the everyday life in civil society and makes every step a walk on potentially thin ice. The arbitrariness creates a pervasive sense of uncertainty and fear among people in the CSO sphere that they themselves and/or their organization could be targeted next, despite having done nothing wrong or illegal. Arbitrary repression creates fragmentation in the civil society sphere, and leaves many activists and CSOs increasingly isolated. It also makes it difficult to plan for the future.

If we recall our earlier account of the process of de-democratization in Turkey after the Gezi demonstrations, there are three related dynamics that can help shed light on this arbitrariness. First, the undermining of the rule of law means that predictable legal principles mean less and less, and the corresponding politicization of the judiciary means that legal proceedings become less predictable and more arbitrary. It is no longer enough for CSOs to avoid breaking the law to stay out of legal trouble. Second, the increasing consolidation of power in the hands of one person – the "one-person rule" that the Venice Commission has warned of – means less predictability as decisions on which organization and even individual should be targeted by various sanctions increasingly has come to rely on the whims of one man: The President. Third, the dramatic shifts in the AKP's and Erdoğan's alliances have resulted in equally dramatic changes in which CSOs are deemed to be enemies of the state. The breakup of the alliance with the Gülen movement turned all their associations into "FETÖ" or "Fettulahist Terrorist Organizations" overnight. Likewise, the fallout with the pro-Kurdish HDP party suddenly (again) turned them and most

CSOs affiliated with them into pariahs after a period of peace negotiations during which these CSOs had been brought in from the cold.

The arbitrariness in who is targeted by the government could also be a deliberate policy aimed at instilling fear among rights based CSOs generally. If so, it can be seen as a cost-effective tactic of pressuring large numbers of actors to impose self-censorship through a limited number of high-profile arrests and closures. At other times, arbitrariness appears to simply stem from overzealous police or prosecutors vying for the President's favors by going after organizations they believe he dislikes, or from co-workers or others taking advantage of an emerging culture of "snitching" on purported terrorists to get rid of competitors for positions or as part of personal vendettas.

The shrinking space is of course not a natural phenomenon but the result of deliberate policies by the government, which has a range of instruments at its disposal. Instruments that appear in our study include intrusive inspections, audits and investigations, fines, closure, arrests, violence, and intimidating public protests or media campaigns against the CSOs in question. More subtle instruments are "hostile takeovers" of boards by government sympathizers or "crowding out" CSOs using GONGOs that compete for government funding and valuable spots in international forums, particularly in the women's rights field.

The extensive post-coup purges in the public administration have also had an indirect impact on civil society in Turkey as many organizations have lost their – often competent and well-intended – counterparts on the 'inside'.

Are organizations in some areas facing more repression than others and if so, where is the space shrinking more or faster?

The space for the civil society in Turkey has been shrinking unevenly and repression has hit different areas and groups in different ways and at different times. Hence, not all CSOs are affected equally or at the same time. CSOs and activists who work on Kurdish affairs in Turkey have long been subjected to closures and other forms of restrictions. This began long before the current

wave of democratic retrenchment and before the AKP came to power. However, following the breakdown of the peace process between the government and the PKK in 2015, many members of the pro-Kurdish HDP and people working in media and other organizations associated with the Kurdish movement have been jailed. CSOs working on Kurdish issues are being targeted among the hardest also in the current situation.

Following the attempted coup of July 15, 2016, a large number of associations with alleged links to the religious movement claimed to be behind the coup – the Gülen movement – were closed down and people with ties to these CSOs were jailed. After the initial waves of purges, which were primarily directed at the Gülen movement, a large number of individuals have faced detention or dismissal from work due to membership in organizations (political parties, unions, or other CSOs) deemed terrorist organizations or due to social media posts in which they criticize government policy such as the recent invasion of the Kurdish Afrin province in northern Syria, which prosecutors has treated as terrorist propaganda.

Other groups in Turkey have also faced repression for a long period of time and continue to do so today. In the increasingly conservative political climate over the past few years, the already achieved rights for minorities and for women have been threatened through repressive politics. This growing conservatism have had most far reaching consequences for women and for LGBTI-persons, and the changes in government policy is likely to have long-lasting consequences. The initial positive changes under the AKP government, with radical legislative improvements as well as changes in attitudes toward women and LGBTI-persons (although, as everywhere, with its limitations) have shifted towards family-oriented policies, remission of achieved legislative rights and open rejection of the principle of gender equality. Gender-based violence is widespread, and reports show an increase in the last years despite growing awareness and recognition of the problem.

Our study shows that when looking at the consequences for the organized women's movement and the LGBTI movement, they have been affected in different ways. CSOs working on LGBTI

rights have experienced banning of activities as well as direct threats and violence. Even if these harsh actions do not necessarily come from state actors, the current political climate gives leeway to violent groups. Impunity, i.e. failure to punish such acts, further increases the vulnerability for LGBTI activists, in the same way as it does for Kurdish activists. LGBTI organizations have found it increasingly difficult to operate in the open.

Women's rights organizations on the other hand, have generally been spared from the harshest forms of repression such as violence, closures, or arrests. Women's rights organizations in the Southeast are obvious exceptions. Here several organizations have been closed down, in some cases leaving cities and villages without for example shelters for abused women. There is a fear that women's organizations also in other parts of the country will be more exposed in the near future. Moreover, women's organizations are some of the most affected by the emergence of a growing number of large and powerful civil society organizations with strong ties to the ruling AKP. These GONGOs crowd out truly independent, rights-based CSOs and swallow up much of the funding that is available domestically, as well as the possibility to be present in international consultations. They also become a control mechanism and function as a tool for the government to promote a gender ideology that goes against the internationally agreed understanding of gender equality as a matter of human rights. However, our study shows that the women's movement in Turkey still has a space to act.

Finally, it is important to mention actors in three areas that do not fall into the traditional conception of civil society but which have been extremely hard hit by the shrinking democratic space in Turkey. As has been widely publicized and noted by international watchdogs, media organizations and individual journalists in Turkey have been subjected to increasingly severe pressure in various forms in recent years. Perhaps less noted is that as the rule of law is under threat, the legal profession is squeezed by extensive purges and government pressure. Finally, academics have faced serious pressure from purges and political appointments of university presidents, and especially social scientists are forced to practice self-censorship in order to keep their jobs. The crackdown on these three groups (journalists, legal professionals, and academics) has far-reaching and

long-term consequences for civil society as well as for Turkish society at large.

9.2   Coping in a shrinking democratic space

What have been the reactions and counter strategies to the shrinking space by rights-based civil society organizations? What specific countermeasures are decided on and on what grounds? How are these measures realized?

The consequences of the shrinking democratic space in Turkey are far-reaching and sometimes dramatic. Although the current state of affairs has created a situation that is often extremely stressful and sometimes seemingly hopeless, people have not given up. Instead, we see how organizations and individuals find new ways of acting; using the space that is still there and creating new spaces in new arenas.

Many organizations continue working in their respective fields but make changes to the kinds of projects they work on so as to avoid government crackdown. Some CSOs have been forced to change focus radically to be able to continue working at all, and many have had to modify their objectives by lowering their expectations on output and (especially) outcomes. There are examples of organizations with a human rights defender profile that have had to scale up their activities as the number of rights violations increase, and the availability of foreign aid is vital in ensuring that they can do so. Apart from their substantive work focus, in the current context of shrinking democratic space, growing authoritarianism, and extensive purges, many CSO workers are also preoccupied with their short-term personal safety and the medium-term survival of their organization.

To an extent, CSOs in Turkey have always had to adapt their activities to what kinds of topics are allowed or considered less problematic, as certain taboo topics have been associated with greater political risks of fines, arrests, violence, or closures long before the rise of the AKP. Most significantly, using the word "genocide" to describe the mass killings of Armenians in 1915, or

working on Kurdish collective rights has always been associated with significant risks. In the early years of the AKP, restrictions on these topics were even eased. However, the arbitrariness and unpredictability of repression today means that this adaptation becomes much more difficult.

Rather than merely having to select a topic that is acceptable today, which in itself is difficult, it has become necessary to think several "moves" ahead and choose a topic that is likely to remain safe even in the future. This has the effect of reducing the willingness to take risks when choosing topics to work on and to enter into partnerships with other organizations. When collaborating with other organizations, the risk of "staining" others (or others staining you) with accusations of terrorism must also be taken into consideration. This is true in all directions: internally between Turkish organizations, in relation to international organizations, the state and the donor. However, there is also a resistance to adjusting to this risk and some instead continue to collaborate as before.

Paradoxically, for some CSOs working in the rights field writ large, including e.g. press freedom, the shrinking space means more work. Hence, they have to expand their organization and activities in order to serve the growing number of people whose rights are being violated. Moreover, increasing international awareness of their plight also means that some organizations have increasing access to international funding. However, these CSOs still operate under uncertainty and face constant risks of closure or arrest.

Just as repression has hit different areas and groups in different ways, so is the space to act uneven. There is a worry that women's rights groups might be the next target and face similar restrictions as for example organizations working with LGBTI rights and given the current conservative climate, they can hardly push the gender equality agenda forward in any way. At the same time women's rights organizations can still operate in the public sphere. The women's rights CSOs actively use the space that they still have, and they have been crucial for the civil society resistance against the shrinking space since Gezi and onwards.

Thus, women's and other CSOs that have room to operate still have the opportunity to protest government policies without risking violence or detention. They can also serve as a source of support for more targeted groups, such as dismissed academics, and provide a physical as well as mental space for meetings.

9.1 Swedish aid in a shrinking democratic space

What are the main challenges for Swedish aid in the current situation in Turkey? In what ways and to what extent has Swedish aid adjusted to the situation?

In the current situation of a shrinking democratic space, the significance of the Swedish aid increases. The opportunities for independent CSOs of securing domestic funding in Turkey has more or less disappeared, and very few other donors give long-term core support, which has always been crucial for CSOs and even more so under the current circumstances.

Sweden has a good reputation as a donor of aid in Turkey. The image that emerges in our study is that of a flexible donor, open to dialogue about changes in aims of and practicalities within projects and more interested in results than details. Sweden is known as being knowledgeable and aware of the current situation in Turkey, and as having good and open communication, and is not only considered a donor but also a partner.

The unique combination of smaller, short-term project support (or "seed funding"), and more substantial, longer-term core support to CSOs appears particularly adequate in the current situation. To be able to combine these two forms of support allows for maximum flexibility. In one end, small, short-term support is flexible in that it makes possible adjustments to a rapidly changing context where new actors are targeted and where it is hard to plan for the future. It also makes it possible to support small organizations that are not able to absorb large sums, but which nevertheless are crucial for the survival of a vibrant civil society. At the other end, long-term core support creates flexibility for larger organizations to adjust aims,

objectives and activities in dialogue with the donor, without being afraid of losing the support.

The one area where the flexibility becomes problematic is the high degree of flexibility is the grant application procedure. There is a lack of clear instructions or even information about what is expected, which results in low quality applications. It could be argued that this is the inevitable flip side of Sida's flexible results-oriented management approach. We doubt this. In a situation of high stress on CSOs, the lack of clear instructions and expectations adds unnecessary burden to already extreme working conditions. This could be easily remedied with a more structured application process and better information about what a good application should contain and look like.

The midterm review recommends that cooperation with the government be done mainly at the local level (with the exception of collaboration with the Turkish Migration Agency, where the report notes that there is a degree of shared interest between Sweden and the government). While inconclusive, there is evidence in our material to support this recommendation. If central government ministries and agencies are heavily politicized or paralyzed by the current repressive climate, it seems possible to still work more freely and effectively with municipal governments. Even if there are problems involved here as well, this appears to us to be an area that could be explored further by Sida.

Sweden supports several important initiatives that aim at breaking the state of fragmentation and isolation in Turkish civil society, which in turn seem to have opened up a space for new collaborations and alliances within civil society. Other worthwhile initiatives specifically aim at counteracting the state if polarization in Turkish society by enabling meetings between individuals on opposite ends of the political spectrum and from different cultural groups.

Are there any drawbacks associated with the aid itself?

Under current circumstances, foreign support is a potential but necessary risk for independent civil society organizations in Turkey. Any partner of a foreign aid agency can be accused of being a

foreign agent but this risk is higher when receiving support from a foreign government that is viewed unfavorably by Ankara. Given the highly volatile nature of the current government's foreign policy, where even bilateral relationships with longstanding allies like Germany or the United States have reached tremendous lows, this is a real risk for any CSO that is dependent on foreign aid. At the moment, Turkish-Swedish bilateral relations are not bad enough to constitute a serious problem in this respect. While many CSOs try to avoid support from the Netherlands, Germany, and the Unites states, Swedish support is not a problem. However, this could change in an instant.

Nevertheless, the benefits far outweigh the potential risks. There are no ways for independent CSOs in the relevant fields to secure domestic funding so for them, foreign support is absolutely vital.

10.   Recommendations

Is the current strategy for reform cooperation with Turkey fit for purpose?

Our most important conclusion from this project is that Swedish reform cooperation is doing much to support democratic actors in Turkey. Despite the rapidly shrinking space for CSOs in the country, there are still many organizations actively working on human rights, women's and LGBTI-persons' rights, and minority rights, as well as doing independent news reporting and research and performing other important democratic functions. Without Swedish support, much of this work would be significantly weakened. In light of the broader aims of Swedish foreign policy concerning the promotion of democracy, human rights, and gender equality, we therefore believe that it would be counterproductive to discontinue reform cooperation in Turkey. On the contrary, in light of these aims, the current situation of a shrinking democratic space is a reason to maintain or even strengthen this cooperation.

Sida's midterm review concludes that none of the objectives in the existing strategy can be expected to be met. This prompts the question of whether the existing strategy needs to be revised or if it will need to significantly change in the upcoming new strategy for

2020-2025. There are several arguments in favor of revision: There have been dramatic changes in Turkish politics which have created radically new conditions, and a new strategy may therefore be needed to adjust to this new situation. It is no longer possible to fulfil the goals in the sense of improving democracy, human rights, women's rights etc. Realistic objectives would be to try to stem negative developments in these areas and ensure the survival of existing CSOs. Moreover, the Turkish EU accession process that is the point of departure for the strategy is on ice.

However, a revision of the strategy may not be needed as long as the implementation of the strategy is flexible enough. The strategy is so general that it is possible to be flexible under its umbrella. Despite the results of the June 24, 2018 elections, a realistic scenario is that the situation in Turkey will continue to be volatile and that it may change in directions that are difficult to predict. This means that if the strategy is changed to fit the present situation it could well be obsolete in just a few months. Even if the EU accession process is on ice, the Swedish government's position is that it should be resumed as soon as possible. If the strategy is changed and the aim of "expediting Turkish membership of the EU" (Utrikes-departementet, 2014, p. 16) is removed from the strategy, this will send a message to Turkey (as well as to EU and to a domestic Swedish audience) that this is no longer the desired ultimate aim. This could be very unfortunate for pro-democracy actors in Turkey.

What is more important is to look forward, as the current strategy is soon coming to an end (2020). When formulating the new strategy, it is important to take into consideration the context of a shrinking democratic space, and that the situation is likely to continue to undergo constant changes also in the years to come.

In line with the midterm review, we recommend for the coming years as well as for the new strategy continued support to organizations working for human rights and democracy, and especially those promoting freedom of expression. In addition, we recommend that Sweden tries to find ways to support Turkish academics in need, which it is not currently doing to a significant degree. This can be done both by supporting unemployed scholars and by providing research grants and platforms for collaboration

and participation in international networks. This can have a knock-on-effect on CSOs at large since the latter depend on academics for expertise and since many CSO volunteers make a living in academia. Independent scholarship is also of importance for society at large. If a generation of university students are taught by teachers who are afraid to talk freely in class or to conduct independent research, this will have lasting consequences for democracy in Turkey.

The midterm review also recommends continued support for women's and LGBTI-rights, and we agree with this conclusion. Both groups are facing growing repression and their rights are in danger in a short term as well as long term perspective. LGBTI organizations need support because they are facing violence, threats, and a rapidly shrinking space to act. Women's organizations on the other hand still have a space to act and funding them therefore constitutes a potentially effective means of supporting CSOs pushing back against the shrinking space.

Polarization is a major problem in Turkish society. The midterm review rightly suggests a greater focus on supporting projects that aim to counteract polarization. We recommend attempting to broaden partnerships beyond the "usual suspects" in Istanbul and Ankara. At the same time, it is important to try to avoid supporting GONGOs, which to a large extent are the tool that the government uses to actually shrink the space for independent CSOs and to promote an agenda that works against human rights, particularly in the field of women's rights. Unlike independent CSOs active in the rights field, GONGOs already have access to government funding and hence do not need additional support. However, it is not an easy task to distinguish between GONGOs and independent CSOs, partly because there is an actual grey area between independent organizations that are forced to adjust their activities in order to survive and those who more directly operate as extensions of the government or the ruling elite. This, but also the navigation in the shrinking space in general, requires staff with intimate understanding of local conditions employed in Turkey, and also sufficient expertise on Turkey at the MFA and Sida in Stockholm.

Sida has recently withdrawn the focal point for Turkey in Stockholm, a position with specific knowledge about the context

and a responsibility to follow and support the implementation of the strategy. This could weaken the expertise on Turkey in a situation where more knowledge rather than less is necessary to be able to make the right decisions in a constantly changing context. It is therefore a worrying step in the wrong direction, especially since Sida decision-making on Turkey is only "partially delegated", which means that it is already further removed from the field than in most countries where Sida operates.

One of the most difficult questions that we have investigated concerns the on-going shift in which new partnerships prioritize civil society actors over the government. We have explored pros and cons with our interlocutors both in Sweden and Turkey. Our cautious conclusion is that it would be difficult to work toward achieving the desired results that are set up in the strategy by working with the government to the same extent as before, but that a full switch to civil society actors exclusively would make both those actors and the Swedish aid to Turkey in general too vulnerable. We realize that some support for e.g. the Turkish justice system may no longer be viable both due to a lack of credible partners and due to domestic political considerations in Sweden. Issues with e.g. family mediation projects supported by Swedish IGO partners working with Turkish judicial institutions also point to the importance of upholding the principle of doing no harm. However, e.g. training programs on human rights or gender equality for civil servants are less problematic, and may still serve to prepare Turkey for a possible return to the reform path in the future. If central government cooperation is difficult, donors should consider partnerships with local governments of all political colors.

The midterm review makes the following recommendation:

"Sida also sees the need to focus more on supporting CSOs, the academia and think tanks both from a short term "survival" perspective (within the most affected topics), and from a more medium to long-term perspective. This entails a more flexible approach between smaller and shorter contributions to longer contributions supporting an enabling environment for a revived and continued EU-accession process." (Sida 2017b)

Our study supports this recommendation. Flexibility on the part of the donor is important when working with local partners in the current context. We recommend retaining the current flexibility in disbursements and in allowing for changes in objective and targets as well as activities and outputs. This requires continued dialogue between donor and partners and a degree of delegation of decisions to local Sida and MFA staff.

This level of flexibility may entail higher overhead costs, as it is more labour intensive to continuously adjust projects, maintain a dialogue with partners, and change disbursement schemes. The combination of smaller short-term and larger long-term grants opens up for a high level of flexibility that is useful in a situation of shrinking democratic space. We recommend the Swedish government and Sida not to prioritize efficiency over effect or effectiveness in this context. Smaller grants, including the "seed-funding" model, where partners have the opportunity to begin with smaller grants administered by the Consulate General in Istanbul and then "graduate" to core funding via the Sida office in Ankara, are administration-intensive. However, we think that it is such a well-functioning model, with very beneficial effects for civil society, that it should be considered as a model to employ in other countries with similar conditions of shrinking democratic space.

The flexibility of Sida's result oriented management approach has had the downside of creating stress in the process of applying for funding from Ankara. Here, Sida can be better at providing support and instructions to applicants and perhaps also better guidance and training for the local Sida staff on how to provide such support. We recommend that Sida either experiment with loosely structured application forms with space for applicants to define their own objectives, targets, activities, and expected outputs, or provide significantly expanded instructions for what Sida expects from applications without forms. Sida should also consider the possibility of opening up for applications in Turkish (as the EU delegation in Turkey has done), as this would widen the applicants in spe and contribute to plurality with regards to possible partners.

When writing the new strategy, we suggest that it should reflect the changed reality that the EU accession process, while formally

still open, is in reality frozen for the foreseeable future. Support for Turkish EU accession should still be a long-term objective for Swedish foreign policy, but in the near future this must be limited to what the mid-term review formulates as preparations for an eventual renewed process. Consequently, we note that it is possible to question the rationale for a joint strategy for Turkey and the Western Balkans. While there may be realistic EU accession prospects for several Balkan states over the period covered by the next strategy, this is not the case for Turkey. The particular conditions under which Swedish aid operates in Turkey are arguably also different enough from the situation in the Balkans to perhaps even warrant a separate strategy.

The new strategy may well reiterate that the long-term objective of Swedish foreign policy with respect to Turkey is to support its quest for EU accession. But it should make clear that the development cooperation objective for the intermediate period is to help independent civil society and pro-democracy actors in Turkey to survive until the political context changes enough to allow for a return to the reform path and to counteract the shrinking space for CSOs as well as the polarization in the country. At the same time, it should not rule out limited cooperation with state, regional, and municipal actors to the extent that they share the same objectives with respect to democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and gender equality.

In sum, we recommend the following:

- Continue, and strengthen, Sweden's reform cooperation with Turkish partners in a short-term as well as a long-term perspective. The shrinking democratic space in Turkey makes this support even more relevant.

- In the new strategy (from 2020), keep and strengthen the overall goals including preparations for a renewed EU accession process, democracy, human rights, gender equality, freedom of expression and rule of law.

- Build in far-reaching flexibility in the implementation of the strategy, as the situation in Turkey is likely to continue to change.

- Consider writing a new strategy specifically for Turkey, as the rationale for this strategy is different from the Western Balkans.

- Continue to support local, small, and medium size organizations working for human rights and democracy, with a particular focus on freedom of expression and women's and LGBTI rights.

- In addition, find ways to support academics. They are crucial for the survival of the civil society and democracy in the short-term as well as the long-term.

- Support organizations and projects actively counteracting the growing polarization in Turkey and explore ways to broaden partnerships.

- Continue to strengthen the support to civil society, but do not completely halt support that includes the government as a beneficiary. Consider moving this support to lower levels, e.g. municipalities when needed.

- Continue to develop the "seed-core model" for aid to Turkey (the combination of smaller seed/project funding and larger core funding).

- Consider using the "seed-core model" in other country contexts where the democratic space is shrinking.

- Develop a method or format for clearer instructions for applications in dialogue with partners, and consider opening up for grant applications in Turkish.

- Make sure that both the Embassy, the Consulate and MFA/Sida in Stockholm have sufficient expertise and enough competence on relevant aspects of the Turkish context, to be able handle the present situation.

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