

## **TURKEY: IT IS TIME TO TELL ANKARA THE TRUTH**

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**The European Union has been taking Ankara for a ride, allowing the Turkish side to believe that joining the European Union was possible. Yet such is not the case and the false promises can only generate incomprehension and resentment. Turkey, a faithful ally of Europe within NATO, deserves to be told the truth.**

The head of Turkish diplomacy, Mr. Abdullah Gul, was gathering on Saturday, February 24, 23 European elected officials of Turkish origin, sitting in the European Parliament or in national assemblies, in Germany, in Austria, in Belgium, in Denmark or in Sweden. His goal : to turn these elected officials into « ambassadors » in charge of dispelling « the prejudices » that exist in Europe against Turkey. Other than the fact that this initiative is dangerous – a national elected official is not the advocate of his country of origin – this shows the extent to which Ankara continues to believe it can join the EU.

It has to be said that there is something deeply unhealthy in the European Union's relationship with Turkey. **Out of weakness and cowardice, giving in to political correctness, held captive to the absurd promises made for some twenty years in order not to upset the Turkish side, Brussels has been pretending that the obstacles to be overcome are essentially technical** and may therefore be lifted through adjustments. This is unfortunately not the case and we must have the courage to say it.

Turkey is not going to join the European Union because, whatever people may say (or not say), **even politics cannot change deep realities. And, in its depths, Europe is a continent of « Christian culture »** (a « Christian club » as some say). **The presence of some 15 to 20 million Muslims amongst some five hundred million Europeans is not going to change anything to this reality. On the contrary even, a certain form of Muslim proselytising, the veil –perceived by some as an aggression and by many as an infringement on women's rights, the fear of fundamentalism, terrorism (even if it obviously concerns only a minority) are so many factors that condition the perception Europe has of Islam and may therefore be such as to scare people and make them balk even more at the prospect of allowing a country of over 70 million Muslims to join it.**

But there is more. Turkey is not going to join the European Union because it remains a **very violent country** : several dozens of extreme-left organisations, the PKK, the Islamists, the extreme-right commit dozens of attacks each year. **Turkey is not going to join the European Union on account of the fact that when a young 17-year old fool manipulated by local fascists kills an Armenian writer, he is feted as a hero by the policemen in charge of arresting him.** Turkey is not going to join the European Union because too many of its policemen are, what is more, heavy-handed, and human rights abuses remain commonplace

there. It is not going to join the European Union because its best writers have to choose between exile, silence and the risk of the trial or the bullet that will put an end to their dreams.

Turkey is not going to join the European Union because **pockets of extreme poverty and backwardness are far too numerous there**, with all their social and political consequences. A few figures testify to it : an **infant mortality rate** of 41.6/1000 (between 6 and 10 times more than Europe), a **life expectancy** ten years lower than that of the UE, a rate of **illiteracy** of 5.6% for men and 21.5 % for women (incidentally, this difference says a lot about the actual position of women in non-urbanised areas), **twenty times less books published than in France, between two and three times more corruption than what is to be found in the European Union.** Turkey is not going to join the European Union because **violence against women** (among other things, in the form of appalling « honour crimes ») remains too great and because the interminable and stupid polemic still being stoked about the **Armenian genocide** shows that this nation does not have the maturity that would allow it face up to its mistakes.

Of course, the technocrats of Brussels and certain out-of-touch politicians may believe the negotiating process is going to make it possible to get beyond these differences or make them secondary. But, aside from the dubious prospects of such a positive and rapid evolution, **the fact remains that having Turkey join without going through a referendum in certain countries would not fail to cause a major crisis and no doubt the break-up of the European Union.**

**There thus remains for our politicians to find ways of making Ankara understand this truth and, above all, of repairing the break that will result.** For if Turkey does not have a calling to « become » European (since it is and will remain Middle-Eastern), it is still, in spite of the few shortcomings we have listed in a far from exhaustive way, both an ally and a friend. An ally and a friend to whom a variety of formulas for association and collaboration can be offered and ought to be. With mutual respect, but with open eyes and without repudiating our values.