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## Guest Editorial

### Turkey's Human Rights Abuses Must Be Stopped

Nuri Kino

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Today marks the last day of the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's official visit to Sweden. But before the Turkish Prime Minister heads back home to Ankara, I would like for him and the Swedish Prime Minister Reinfeldt to take part in a story about a hidden Turkish citizen. For purposes of safety and anonymity, we may call her Siham. Her destiny could most likely be described as one of many refugee calamities. However, what makes her story unique and revealing is the fact that this particular case incarnates Turkey's deep-rooted dilemma. On the one hand Turkey is reformed and improved. Following this more expectations on this fabulous nation are actually lived up to. On the other hand the country is being nationalised and heading directly towards being islamified.

Siham's stay in Sweden is for all intensive purposes deemed to be "illegitimate" and she is hiding from "justice".

Siham is 57 years of age. Lonely. Isolated. Single. Childless. She is wanted by the police. She is hiding. Frightened. Threatened while running the risk of being killed at any point. She reminisces about her obscure past. Fifteen years ago she was a pharmacist owning her own pharmacy. She was appreciated and well-known. One day eleven persons are killed and 12 others injured in a terrorist atrocity. Her younger brother, barely 17 years old then, is arrested allegedly for involvement in the detonation of the bomb that was the cause of the massive casualties.

Siham's life is shattered. A struggle, a matter of life and death for her brother's redress is introduced. She is inferior in two aspects; she is a woman and she is of Christian faith. On two occasions her brother is declared dead. Turkey's national television is "proud" to announce that "the worst of traitors and terrorists now is dead in prison". On two occasions Siham begins wearing black clothes, demonstrating her sorrow and pain, only to take them off shortly thereafter. The brother is alive. It is a diversion -- part of the systematic harassment and psychological terror towards the family and all the other Christians.

After nearly 13 years of imprisonment the brother was conditionally released. He fled to Sweden where he applied for asylum. He also appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg for judicial review of the verdict leading to nearly 13 years of imprisonment and more tragically 13 years of a loss of the quality of his life and liberty. The complaints filed against the Turkish Government included, among other claims, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment or punishment and the lack of an independent and impartial tribunal. The European Court of Human Rights reached the decision which stated the torture and the unfairness of the trial, the biased sessions of the Turkish court. The brother was granted asylum in Sweden and was seen as a "person in need of protection." On a tourist visa Siham followed her brother to Sweden, where she immediately applied for asylum. The Swedish Migration Board declined her application. Supposedly she was threatened, it was Turkey's task and liability to protect her. The fact that the Turkish police and military are infiltrated by nationalists and fundamentalists, the same groups that had threatened Siham and her brother, was completely ignored and therefore not taken into consideration when deciding her case.

Under Swedish law, persons who run the risk of persecution due to their political or religious convictions may petition and qualify for protection and asylum in Sweden. Subsequently there is a discussion of the likelihood of persecution; will this occur, i.e. will she be injured?

In this particular case concerns an actor that has a close linkage with the authorities and the Government. Is the same Government then going to protect her? The answer is obvious. No conjecture is required. There are both proofs of menace and reprisals but also an indisputable and documented history where thousands of people were involved.

The brother's case is internationally recognised and many human rights groups fought for his justice while he innocently served 13 years of imprisonment.

Lately, the network of fundamental nationalists and Islamists has been revealed in several Turkish trials. Siham's lawyer also refers to a directive from the Turkish Home Office concerning the scrutiny and control of released political prisoners. This implies that neither released political prisoners nor their families can ever feel total safe. An eminent Turkish human rights activist and lawyer writes that Siham cannot be sent back to Turkey.

Reinfeldt, ask Erdogan if Siham has to be threatened by a whole nation, even by those who supposedly are there to protect

her? The Swedish Migration Board quotidian fail in the application of the Swedish Aliens' Act. As of today Turkey is a country that is unwieldy. However, to send Siham back is to disregard both Swedish law and international conventions, not to mention the most basic notions of what is considered a violation of human rights.

Erdogan is accompanied by his Minister of Trade, in an effort to further businesses with Sweden. Reinfeldt, Turkey is not solely a negotiating party to Ericsson and other big businesses. The picture we want of Turkey should be the correct one -- but it is not, at least not yet.

*Translated from [Swedish](#) by Kinora Awrohum.*

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*[Nuri Kino](#) is a journalist in Sweden specializing in investigative journalism, and is one of the most highly awarded journalists in Europe ([CV](#)). He is an Assyrian from Turkey. His documentary, *Assyriska: a National team without a Nation*, was awarded The Golden Palm at the 2006 Beverly Hills Film festival.*

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